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ABSTRACT

An evaluation was conducted of the Better Opportunities for New Directions (BOND) demonstration that tested the conformance between the Texas Food Stamp Employment and Training (E&T) and Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) programs. The research design was a longitudinal panel approach. First-round interviews with 54 individuals probed clients' basic needs and personal circumstances, patterns of public and other outside assistance, employment histories, barriers to employment, and anticipated benefits of BOND participation. Second-round interviews with 37 individuals elicited their assessment of activities and services and the impacts of participation. Participants portrayed a broad range of individual needs and circumstances. Most participants felt they had benefited from BOND. It enhanced their employability through education, training, and job readiness/job search activities and through improved self-esteem, motivation, and communication skills. Participants felt that BOND improved their job preparation and search skills, encouraged and enabled them to attend postsecondary and General Educational Development classes, and helped them by providing support services. They suggested that not only sanctions but opportunities and perceived benefits drove participation. Participants' suggestions delivered these "messages" to policymakers: encourage voluntary participation; value less tangible program outcomes; provide access to advanced education and training; provide statewide coverage; and recognize external barriers. (Appended are profiles of survey participants.) (YLB)

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Texas Food Stamp Employment and Training/JOBS Conformance Demonstration:

BOND Participant Survey Final Report

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November 1995

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At CHR, Michael Stone was largely responsible for the designing the first-round instrument and recording the data. Dr. Stone and Amy Liebman conducted the first-round interviews. Jerry Olson provided client information data from the Texas JOBS files. Deanna Schexnayder and Chris King reviewed and commented upon the manuscript. Production assistance was provided by Karen Alan and Diane Tucker of the administrative staff at CHR.

Executive Summary

The Center for the Study of Human Resources (CHR) of the LBJ School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin has been conducting a multi-year evaluation (FY 1993 thru FY 1995)) for the Texas Department of Human Services (DHS) of the Texas Food Stamp Employment and Training (E&T)/Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) Program Conformance Demonstration. The evaluation, sponsored by Food and Consumer Services of U.S. Department of Agriculture, was designed to describe and monitor policies and practices developed and implemented for the demonstration, and to assess their preliminary impacts on service delivery, participation, and outcomes. Results were used for direct program improvements and to refine the model for the possible extension to other counties in Texas.

The demonstration, known locally as BOND (Better Opportunities for New Directions), tests the conformance compatibility between the E&T and JOBS programs. JOBS policies and procedures have been applied to eligible Food Stamp recipients; staff serving the two client groups have been merged; and activities and support services provided to JOBS and E&T participants, with few exceptions, have become identical. McLennan County is host of the BOND demonstration.

CHR staff combined four complementary research approaches to conduct the evaluation: process, impact, participant survey and cost studies. This report presents the results from the participant survey component of the evaluation. Researchers collected data concerning the experiences and perceptions of E&T participants in BOND. The qualitative analysis of client perceptions and experiences is intended to supplement CHR's other evaluation approaches. It does so by investigating the demonstration's effects on the lives and circumstances of the individuals and families that the demonstration is designed to serve.

Approach

CHR researchers selected a longitudinal panel approach and completed two rounds of interviews. First-round interviews with fifty-four individuals were conducted in October/November 1994; follow-up interviews with thirty-seven individuals were conducted about six months later in April/May 1995. First-round interviews probed clients' basic needs and personal circumstances, patterns of public and other outside assistance, employment histories, barriers to employment, and the anticipated benefits of BOND participation. Second-round interviews elicited their assessment of activities and services provided by BOND, the effects of policies applied in the demonstration, and the impacts of participation on their employability and other aspects of their personal lives.

Key Findings

The survey participants provided descriptive data and experiential insights that highlight several aspects of the BOND demonstration. The data portray the wide ranging demographic features, work histories, and personal circumstances among E&T participants; provide informal measures of BOND's ability to address the needs and employment barriers of this diverse population; partially reveal the extent to which BOND has attained its program objectives and expectations; and provide a basis for policy recommendations to improve the service delivery model from the participants' point of view.

Diverse Population. The survey participants portray the broad range of individual needs and circumstance found among a cross-section of working and non-working individuals and their families in the E&T population.

The survey data revealed several features of the participant group:

- Two-thirds of the participants had worked recently at jobs that had lasted almost two years; the other one-third had not worked for pay at any time during three years prior to the interview.
- Seventy percent had high school diplomas or the equivalent and nearly ten percent had college degrees. Another seven percent had not advanced beyond eighth grade.
- Forty percent had been previously enrolled in a vocational training class and two-thirds of these individuals had worked in the field for which they had been trained.
- Almost two-thirds of the participants—about equally split between two-parent and female, single-parent families—had dependent children in their households. Overall, about 40 percent were married, 30 percent divorced, and 30 percent single, never married.
- Most lived in housing and neighborhoods that were acceptable to them, and had access to fairly reliable modes of transport.
- Approximately one-third of the participants had personal health problems that affected them either all or most of the time, and made it hard for them to work.
- Current spells of Food Stamps assistance ranged from two months to 13 years. averaged just over three years and was much higher among women than men.
- One-third had previously received AFDC and more than two-fifths, mostly women had received Medicaid for themselves or their children. As a group they depended on outside assistance to meet many of their basic needs, including food, shelter, and most importantly, medical assistance.

The BOND demonstration attempted to address the employment, education, training, and support service needs of this diverse group. This reflects the extent to which BOND has moved E&T away from narrow labor force attachment towards a more individualized and comprehensive workforce development strategy. In doing so, the BOND model has some strengths, as well as weaknesses, from the participants' perspectives.

Informal Measures. Most survey participants felt that they had benefited from BOND. BOND enhanced their employability through education, training, and job readiness/job search activities, and/or through improved self-esteem, motivation, and communication skills gained while participating. Nevertheless, experiences, perception, and outcomes of BOND are as varied as the personal circumstances and employment barriers of the E&T population.

- ***Program purpose.*** Overall, the vast majority of the second-round participants believed that BOND had accomplished its purpose; that the services from BOND had met all of their expectations; and that it had made a difference not only in their lives, but in the lives of family members and friends also.

- ***Employment.*** Nearly half of the second round participants reported that they had found a job since starting the BOND program. Three-quarters of these thought that BOND helped them get these jobs.

- ***Employment barriers.*** Participants felt that BOND has had some effect on reducing inadequate job skills and inadequate job search skills. Persistent barriers clustered around inadequate education, labor market conditions, and disability/health problems. Young children/child care was a barrier consistently cited by women.

- ***Outside assistance.*** Many participants continued to receive outside assistance to meet selected basic needs, particularly with food, housing, and health care. Responses did indicate that BOND may have helped them meet these basic needs better overall.

BOND Objectives and Expectations. Participants indicated some of the successes and the limits of the demonstration in attaining its more formal objectives and expectations. BOND was designed in part to:

- To provide Food Stamp E&T participants expanded and enhanced activity components and support services
- To increase client participation through a clear sanction policy
- To target resources based upon participant need
- To increase participant capacity for self-sufficiency

- ***Activities and services.*** Participants felt that BOND improved their job preparation and search skills, encouraged and enabled them to attend postsecondary and GED classes, and helped them by providing child care and transportation assistance. Despite these accomplishments, many participants thought that better job development and placement services, access to on-the job training, job skills training, and unpaid work experiences could improve BOND. Some questioned the logic of providing child care assistance to help them prepare for a job, but not to keep their job, if they found one.

- ***Sanctions and participation.*** The participants suggested that not only sanctions but opportunity and perceived benefits drove participation. The threat of losing benefits may have stimulated initial BOND participation, but this effect appears to have had less weight over the duration of the program, as participants began to register personal benefits from participation. Participants also suggested that some individuals would rather lose their Food Stamps benefit than participate.

- ***Resource targeting.*** BOND provided more component options per service level than the regular E&T program and allowed clients to volunteer; the latter was perhaps the most effective way of matching client needs and expectations with program options. Fully one-third of the survey group voluntarily participated to improve their wage-earning potential, to reduce their need for public assistance, or to get support services that enabled them to approach their employment goals. Still, participants pointed out that variations in personal development and job readiness within the service levels group caused tension among participants, especially in life skills and core seminars.

- ***Self-sufficiency.*** Improved job search skills, education achievement, increased decision-making skills, and heightened self-esteem and motivation are probably associated with improved participant capacity for self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, as a group, the rewards of labor market participation appear to leave many participants below their self-reported, self-sufficiency wage. Most employment entries of survey participants have been similar to their pre-program experiences—low-wage jobs in which turnover and absenteeism are high and benefits such as health insurance and sick leave virtually non-existent.

Policy Implications. The survey participants have collectively delivered "messages" for policy makers to:

- Encourage voluntary participation
- Value less tangible program outcomes as well as standard program outcome measures of employment and earnings
- Provide access to substantive job skills training, work experience, and higher education
- Expand and more effectively market the opportunities of enhanced E&T activities and services statewide
- Recognize persistent barriers beyond scope of the BOND program design, including the need to create realistic child and health care options.

Voluntary participation. Participants were emphatic that effective participation depended on having a positive attitude, that only those who wanted to participate would benefit and that those who didn't want to were likely to be disruptive.

Intangible benefits. Many participants described improvements in self-esteem, social skills, and motivation as program outcomes. BOND seminars and other components provided a forum for social interaction and presented pathways to more productive alternatives to their current lifestyles for many participants. Participants also noted BOND's positive effect on their children and families..

Access to advanced education and training. Survey participants recognized that better access to job skills training for the non-college bound, substantive work experience, and higher education would increase their chances of obtaining and eliminate barriers to better job opportunities.

Statewide coverage. Participants strongly supported statewide extension of the BOND model. Better marketing of available opportunities would draw participants to the program.

External barriers. Labor market conditions and health/disability problems are persistent client-identified barriers to employment that lay outside of BOND. Participants noted the need for more and better real job opportunities and felt that BOND staff should expand job development and placement efforts. Individuals with children needed access to affordable child care as a pre-condition for expanding their work effort. Several individuals needed help with health and disability problems that were beyond the resource range of BOND.

Recommendations. Participant survey results provide a basis for additional policy considerations related to expanding a model similar to BOND to other areas of Texas. Future programs designed to serve a broad and diverse group of working and non-working poor should:

- Recognize job market realities faced by participants, i.e., declining wages for lower-skilled, less-educated workers
- Support peer and lifelong learning
- Retain the flexibility to address individual needs and circumstances
- Anticipate gender shifts in the composition of work registrant and E&T participant groups

Wages/skills/education parity. Many recent and most current jobs held by participants were mainly in the secondary labor market, despite the fact that most had

finished high school or GED and many have had some postsecondary education or vocational course work. Employment and earnings gains from programs like BOND can be expected to be seriously constrained without a strong emphasis on postsecondary education and high-skills training. "Gateway" programs for individuals who complete their GED or return to school after extended time periods could be designed to help individuals with the transition to a postsecondary environment.

Peer and lifelong learning. Many participants found BOND's encouragement of peer learning and teaching highly effective. The outstanding positive experience for many was "the other people," learning from each other.

Peers are also an effective mode of program extension. Marketing of BOND at orientation might be strengthened by individuals returning and sharing their success stories with others.

Lifelong learning and skills upgrading could be supported by expanded post-program services, including continuing education, training, job search assistance and case management. This approach could sustain and build upon short-term, incremental accomplishments associated with BOND. Policy makers could eliminate the twenty hour participation requirement for employed persons, but continue providing them services while enrolled in part-time education and training directed towards their long-term self-sufficiency. For those no longer requiring public assistance, a continuum of activities and services could made available through the new Texas Workforce Commission.

Flexibility/individualized services. Employment and training programs should provide independent, individualized assessment and service planning procedures that incorporate informed client choice concerning available components, job goals and realistic employment expectations. Program staff should recognize that women face a greater challenge in finding work that can allow them to advance towards self-sufficiency and that the lack of child care is a persistent employment barrier among women with children. As such, any expansion of the BOND model should develop access to in-program and post-program child care.

Policy makers should consider developing on-site child care centers at community and technical colleges which could provide employment opportunities, reduce child care cost, and support increased enrollments in postsecondary education and vocational training.

Demographic shifts. Apparently, there has been a significant rise in the number of females and decline in the number of males in the county work registrant group and in the group of those who actually participated in E&T in BOND. The increase in females may partially be explained by changes in exemption and volunteer policy. In addition to the structural change in the work registrant population, BOND may have served

as a magnet for females who needed child care to achieve their education and training objectives.

The decline in males may be another program effect. Single men without dependents may have more marginal attachment to Food Stamps than others; men in general may have real or perceived opportunity costs that prejudice their participation. The more intensive components lasting over a longer period of time have effectively raised the cost of receiving Food Stamps; the cost may be too high for those with other subsistence alternatives.

* * * *

In the broader context, policy makers should more closely address the links between economic and welfare policies. Current policy sends mixed signals to the private sector—advocating on one side, high-skilled, high-wage jobs as the future for the domestic workforce and providing on the other a supply of low-skilled, low-wage workers from public assistance programs. Ideally, we need to develop mutually-beneficial partnerships between employers and programs in which employers receive the benefit of BOND pre-employment screening and job-ready employees, and in exchange they provide jobs that have family-friendly, learning environments with well-defined career paths.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Center for the Study of Human Resources (CHR) of the LBJ School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin has been conducting a multi-year evaluation (FY 1993 thru FY 1995)) for the Texas Department of Human Services (DHS) of the Texas Food Stamp Employment and Training (E&T)/Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) Program Conformance Demonstration. The evaluation, sponsored by Food and Consumer Services of U.S. Department of Agriculture, was designed to describe and monitor policies and practices developed and implemented for the demonstration, and to assess their preliminary impacts on service delivery, participation, and outcomes. Results were used to refine the demonstration model for direct program improvements and for the possible extension of the model to other counties in Texas.

This report presents the results from the participant survey conducted as part of the evaluation. Researchers collected data concerning the experiences and perceptions of E&T participants in BOND. The qualitative analysis of client perceptions is intended to supplement CHR's other evaluation approaches (process, impact, and cost studies) and does so by directly probing the program's effects on the lives and circumstances of the individuals and families that the demonstration is designed to serve. Participants may have very different perspectives of policies, procedures, services. and outcomes than do providers, administrators, and policy makers. Frequently unheard in program evaluations, their voices can give a greater depth to policy and program development. Towards that goal, this report conveys the participant messages to concerned audiences. To the extent that customer satisfaction is associated with program effectiveness, the needs, expectations, and perceptions of participants can help to improve policy and program design.

Conformance Demonstration Overview

The demonstration, known locally as BOND (Better Opportunities for New Directions), tests the conformance compatibility between the E&T and JOBS programs. JOBS policies and procedures have been applied to eligible Food Stamp recipients; staff serving the two client groups have been merged; and activities and support services provided to JOBS and E&T participants, with few exceptions, have become identical.[1]

The demonstration has four basic objectives:

- To assure continuity of services for Food Stamp E&T and JOBS program participants

[1] Texas Department of Human Services, 1992; Texas Department of Human Services, 1993.

- To provide Food Stamp E&T participants expanded and enhanced activity components and support services
- To increase client participation through a clear sanction policy, and
- To target resources based upon participant need.[2]

DHS identified at least three desired outcomes to the E&T and JOBS conformance demonstration.[3] First, the adoption of JOBS policies and component activities by the E&T would permit continuity-of-service delivery by allowing participants to remain in an education, training, or employment-related activity despite changes in program eligibility.[4] Second, common administrative processes, support materials, staff training, and a single service delivery system may increase efficiency and reduce certain program costs. Third, the expanded and enhanced employment program may more rapidly move participants toward self-sufficiency.

BOND Evaluation Overview

CHR staff have combined four complementary research approaches to conduct the evaluation. These research approaches are:

- A process evaluation of E&T program operations at the demonstration (McLennan County) and the comparison (Smith County) sites
- A survey of E&T program participants in McLennan County
- An impact study that includes statistical analyses using measures designed by DHS and CHR staff and program data from the demonstration and comparison sites
- A cost analysis of the demonstration project.

Key topics and primary research questions for the comprehensive evaluation of the BOND demonstration are:

I. *Program Design and Implementation.* What changes occurred in the E&T program design in McLennan County during the demonstration period and how were these changes implemented?

II. *Client Flow and Client Participation Patterns.* How did the E&T demonstration affect client flow and program participation patterns?

III. *Activities and Services.* How did the demonstration affect the range and

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[2] Texas Department of Human Services, 1992.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Texas is a low AFDC benefit state and there is considerable movement of public assistance recipients between AFDC and Food Stamps eligibility.

intensity of activities and services provided to E&T participants?

IV. *Outcomes*. What effect has the demonstration had on participant employment and earnings, academic achievement, job skills development, or other possible outcomes?

V. *Costs*. Is there a significant difference in the cost of the Food Stamp E&T demonstration program compared to the pre-demonstration program and the comparison site program? What is the source of any identified cost variations?

Participant Survey Overview

CHR researchers selected a longitudinal panel approach to collect data concerning the experiences and perceptions of E&T participants in BOND. Researchers completed two rounds of interviews: first-round interviews with fifty-four individuals were conducted in October/November 1994; follow-up interviews with thirty-seven individuals were conducted six months later in April/May 1995. First-round interviews probed clients' basic needs and personal circumstances, patterns of public and other outside assistance, employment histories, barriers to employment, and the anticipated benefits of BOND participation. Second-round interviews elicited their assessment of activities and services provided by BOND, the effects of policies applied in the demonstration, and the impacts of participation on their employability and other aspects of their personal lives. Prior to conducting the panel study, researchers had interviewed a non-random convenience sample of twenty-six McLennan County E&T participants during March 1993, the year preceding the demonstration. The purpose of the survey was to develop a baseline understanding of the range of perceptions, opinions, and circumstances of E&T participants during the pre-demonstration period.[5]

Participation in the study was voluntary. Researchers sent letters that informed E&T clients about the survey and invited them to participate in intensive interviews that usually lasted 30 to 45 minutes. Interviews were conducted either at the service delivery site, the client's home, or at other locations more convenient for the participant. Target, Weiners, and Taco Bell donated gift certificates that served as incentives for second-round participation.

Methodology. The survey design originally called for a stratified random sample of E&T participants that reflected resource targeting strategies and program operations in other Texas counties with JOBS programs.[6] The McLennan County JOBS program has

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[5]Pan, 1993.

[6]JOBS resource targeting follows "Service Level" assignments based on education, training, and employment criteria. Service Level I are the "more job-ready clients;" Service Level III, the least; and Service Level II are in between. JOBS in Texas targets resources to SL I and SL II participants. SL I

the distinction of having an exceptionally high number of enrollees in postsecondary education, a pattern that was replicated among E&T participants in BOND. In order to more closely resemble JOBS enrollment patterns statewide and thereby increase the applicability of survey results to the prospect of expanding conformance to other Texas counties, researchers under-sampled postsecondary participants and over-sampled participants in other components. With a goal of interviewing 60 to 65 individuals in the first round, researchers sent letters in September encouraging participation in October's survey to a stratified sample of 92 Bond participants, most of whom had recently begun the program. Twenty-five of these individuals were enrolled in Postsecondary Education, 28 had just been enrolled in Life Skills, a Job Readiness seminar, and 40 others were distributed across other components (Adult Education, Survival Skills Training, Unpaid Work Experience) or in conciliation awaiting reassignment.

Irregular and inconsistent participation patterns, particularly among individuals in the Job Readiness/Job Search components, soon led researchers to replace the random sample with a convenience sample. When CHR staff began to conduct first-round interviews in October, more than a quarter of the original sample were no longer actively participating for disparate reasons including case closures, benefit denials, employment entries, sanctions, and changes in exemption status. Another third did not respond to contacts or refused to cooperate; twenty among these were no longer found at the address or phone numbers provided by DHS. Only 24 individuals from the original sample were interviewed during 10 days of field work in early October. Alternatively, participants, who were not active in BOND at the time the sample was drawn, were available at service delivery sites and willing to talk with interviewers.

When combined with staff time and resource limits, these inconsistent participation patterns induced researchers to convert to a stratified convenience sample. Seven non-random participant interviews were completed in October and an additional 23 interviews were conducted in early November. Only the Postsecondary strata retained a semblance of randomness: 12 of the 13 individuals interviewed were part of the random sample. Thirty-seven of the 54 individuals who participated in the first round completed the follow-up interview.[7] In both the first and second rounds, researchers made at least

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normally are referred to Job Readiness/Job Search components; SL II are referred to Adult Education, Survival Skills Training, and Unpaid Work Experience, before referral to employment services; SL III are usually referred to "other community resources." All those with a high school diploma or GED are SL I: these individuals could be enrolled in postsecondary education, but actual enrollments have been low in the Texas JOBS program.

[7]Seven of the remainder had either moved from the county or could not be located. Six of those directly contacted were no longer willing to participate. Three had scheduling conflicts, primarily caused by working out-of-town.

five attempts (letter, phone calls, home and visits to service delivery sites) to schedule and conduct interviews with individuals who had been identified by DHS as actively participating in BOND during the first round or had participated in the first round.

The survey instrument contained boxed, scaled, and open-ended questions. Data were entered, tabulated, and reviewed for each round of interviews, then correlated with each other. Results and implications comprise the body of this report.

Organization of Text

Section Two presents group characteristics of the survey participants based primarily on first-round interviews. This section serves to introduce the survey population and presents data concerning demographic features, education levels, training experience, work histories, and other aspects of their personal situations. Section Three concentrates more on participant perceptions and experiences in BOND based on first and second-round interviews. It conveys participant perceptions of BOND that range from their general understanding of the program and its goals to specific benefits that they attribute to the demonstration. It relates their experiences with policies applied in the demonstration, procedures during steps in client flow, activities and support services provided, and outcomes, including educational achievement, employment and wages, and less-tangible benefits, such as motivation and self-esteem. In doing so, this section largely follows the first four key research questions listed above. Section Four concludes the report by providing a summary analysis of survey results and policy and program recommendations based on participant "messages" and insights of the researchers.

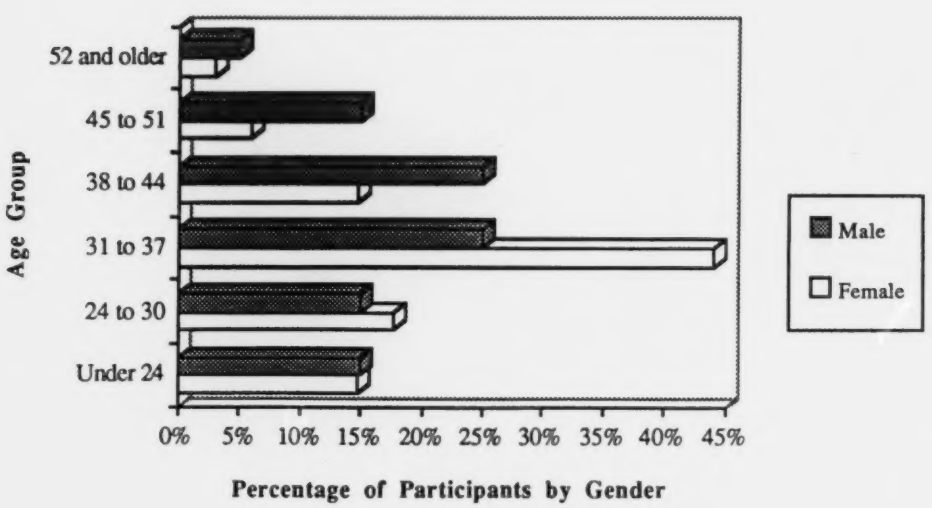
II. PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Demographic features and other personal characteristics presented in this section, including household composition, education and work histories, and receipt of public assistance, suggest the diversity among individuals who participated in the survey. This section also identifies similarities and differences between features of survey participants and all E&T participants in BOND, active E&T work registrants in McLennan County, and active E&T work registrants statewide at the time of the first-round interviews.

Demographic and Household Features

First-Round Features. Thirty-four women and 20 men participated in the first round. Their ages ranged between 19 and 54, and the average age was 34.5 (33 for women and 36 for men). Women were concentrated within the 31-37 age range while men were more evenly distributed (Figure 2.1). Twenty-five Whites (46 percent), twenty-one Blacks (39 percent), and seven Hispanics (13 percent) were interviewed. Almost 93 percent of the survey participants had some secondary education and among these the average years of education was 11.7. Nearly 65 percent had a high school education or beyond.

Figure 2.1
Age Distribution by Gender



Source: 1994 Participant Survey

Twenty-two first-round participants were married (41 percent), 17 either separated or divorced (31 percent), and 15 single and never married (28 percent). The average household size was 3.2 persons. Seven participants lived alone, and the two largest households had six members each.

Thirty-five participants (65 percent)—about equally split between two-parent and female, single-parent families—had dependent children in their households. The participants with children had on average two children per household; no household had more than three children. Just over half of the participants had children 12 years of age or younger. Eighteen had children under six years old, and 11 others had children between six and twelve years of age inclusive. Of the 71 total dependent children in the participant households, 55 were 12 years old or younger (77 percent): 27 of these were between six and twelve inclusive (38 percent); 28 were under six years old (39 percent); and 11 were under three (15 percent).

First and Second-Round Features. Group profiles of the first and second round participants are similar except for a few noteworthy differences. Table 2.1 shows that age, gender, and education averages and distributions remained relatively close between rounds. There was a slight increase in married participants and a slight drop in single, never-married participants. Eighteen second-round participants were married (49 percent), 10 either separated or divorced (27 percent), and 9 single and never married (24 percent). Twenty-eight participants (75 percent)—16 in two-parent and 12 in female, single-parent families—had dependent children in their households.

Fewer white males, as well as persons in single and two-person households, participated in the second round while the share of women, minorities (particularly Hispanic), larger households, and participants with three children increased (Table 2.1 and Table 2.2).[8] . Although the average children per household only increased slightly between rounds, the proportion of households with more and slightly older children increased.

Survey Participants and E&T Participants in BOND. Data in Table 2.1 suggests that the first-round survey participants were basically representative of all E&T participants in BOND at that time. The two groups exhibited similar demographic characteristics, most strongly in terms of gender and racial/ethnic distributions. Females—by approximately two to one margins—dominated both populations. Whites were most strongly represented, followed by Blacks, then Hispanics in almost exact proportions.

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[8]Eight of twenty first-round males did not participate in second-round interviews; five of these were white.

Table 2.1
Demographic Characteristics of Survey Participants and E&T Participants in BOND

	First-Round Participants (Oct. - Nov. 1994)	Second-Round Participants (April - May 1995)	All Participants in BOND (November 1994)
N (total number)	54	37	316
Age:			
Mean	34.5	34.1	31.1
Age Group (%):			
Under 24	15	14	23
24 - 30	17	19	26
31 - 37	37	38	27
38 - 44	19	16	15
45 - 51	9	8	6
52 and over	4	5	3
Gender (%):			
Female	63	68	71
Male	37	33	29
Ethnicity (%):			
White	46	38	47
Blacks	39	41	38
Hispanic	13	19	15
Other	2	3	0
Educational Attainment (%):			
Less than 9th grade	7	8	7
9th - 11th grade	28	30	18
High School Graduate	41	41	44
Some College	15	16	31
College Graduate	9	5	0
Average Years Education (w/Secondary Education)	11.7	11.6	12.3
Household Number (%):			
One	13	8	25
Two	26	19	20
Three	17	16	27
Four	19	22	11
Five	22	30	12
Six	4	5	5
Average Household Size	3.2	3.6	2.8

Sources: 1994 Participant Survey; 1995 Participant Survey; Modified JOBS Files

Table 2.2
Children in Survey Participant Households

Children in household (%):	First Round	Second Round
None	35	24
One	19	19
Two	24	24
Three	22	32
Total number of children (n)	71	60
Average # children per household (households with children)	2	2
Age of children (%):		
Less than 6 years of age	39	32
6-12 years of age	38	42
More than 12 years of age	23	27

Sources: 1994 and 1995 Participant Surveys

There were, however, differences. Survey participants were slightly older and less well-educated members of marginally larger households. Less than one-third of the survey participants were thirty or under, compared to almost half of all E&T participants in BOND. Among the latter, 75 percent had completed high school or some college, compared to 65 percent of the survey group. These age and education differentials may be largely explained by the decision to under-sample E&T participants enrolled in postsecondary education (who comprise about half of the active participants). As a group these individuals are likely to be younger and have completed their secondary education. Under-sampling of better-educated participants has two effects. On the one hand, it may signify a failure of the survey to fully capture the human capital investments of the entire E&T population in BOND; on the other it may increase the relevance of the survey results to the needs of E&T populations elsewhere in the state.

Survey Participants and McLennan County Work Registrants. In contrast to the close correspondence between the survey and total BOND populations, the survey population differs significantly from the population of active E&T work registrants in McLennan County. While the age patterns are fairly similar, the statistics in Table 2.3 reveal these contrasts:

- Gender representation is more evenly split among total work registrants in McLennan County. Males prevail slightly (51 to 49 percent) compared to the overwhelmingly female survey population (63 percent) and E&T participant population (71 percent).

- Racial/ethnic representation for Whites and Blacks is reversed. Whites have a smaller presence in the active work registrant population (40 compared to 46 percent in the survey population) and Blacks have a greater presence (45 compared to 39 percent in the survey population).

- Active work registrants in McLennan County have less average years of educational attainment than the survey population and the E&T participant population (11.3 compared to 11.7 and 12.3 respectively). This difference is partially attributable to the greater percentage of work registrants with less than a 9th grade education (17 compared to 7 percent within the other two groups).

- Single households are predominant among active work registrants, representing 46 percent of the total population compared to 13 percent of survey participants and 25 percent of the E&T participant population. The average household size is much smaller in the McLennan County active work registrant population (2.3 compared to 3.2 in the survey population).

These statistics suggests that males, single householders and less-educated individuals are under-represented in the survey and the total E&T participant populations. The difference in terms of education is again associated with the high enrollments in postsecondary education. The low participation rates for males and single householders may be a program effect; individuals more marginally dependent on Food Stamps may be less willing to participate.[9]

Survey Participants and Texas E&T County Work Registrants. Similarly, the survey population differs significantly from the population of E&T work registrants active statewide in other E&T counties. (Except for racial/ethnic and slight educational differences, this group is remarkably similar to the active work registrant group in McLennan County.) Although average age (34.9 in all E&T counties and 34.5 in the survey population) and the age distribution patterns, except for the 31 to 37 bracket, are similar, statistics in Table 2.3 reveal sharp contrasts. It can be observed that :

- Work registrants in E&T counties are predominantly male; males represent almost 55 percent of the population compared to 37 percent in the survey population.

- There is a much smaller presence of whites (24 percent compared to 46 percent in the survey population) and a much larger presence of Hispanics (40 percent compared to 13 percent) in the larger population.

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[9]The impact study will investigate sanctions data, and may be able to identify non-compliance patterns.

Table 2.3
Work Registrant Characteristics:
Survey Participants, McLennan County, and E&T Counties Statewide
November 1994

	Survey Participants	McLennan County	Statewide E&T
N (Total Number)	54	3255	NA
Age:			
Mean	34.5	33.6	34.9
Age Group (%):			
Under 24	15	21	19
24 - 30	17	20	18
31 - 37	37	25	23
38 - 44	19	19	20
45 - 51	9	9	12
52 and over	4	6	8
Gender (%):			
Female	63	49	46
Male	37	51	55
Ethnicity (%):			
White	46	40	24
Blacks	39	45	34
Hispanic	13	14	40
Other	2	1	2
Educational Attainment (%):			
Less than 9th grade	7	17	28
9th - grade	28	23	22
High School Graduate	41	43	39
Some College	15	16	10
College Graduate	9	1	1
Average Years Education (w/Secondary Education)	11.7	11.3	10.2
Household Number (%):			
One	13	46	45
Two	26	16	15
Three	17	16	15
Four	19	12	12
Five	22	6	8
Six or more	4	4	6
Average Household Size	3.2	2.3	2.4

Sources: 1994 Participant Survey; Texas JOBS Files; TDHS Program Budget and Statistics

- Work registrants in E&T counties have less reported education. Whereas 28 percent of the larger work registrant pool has less than a ninth grade education, only 7 percent of the survey population are in that category. Proportionately fewer work registrants have attended school through the twelfth grade and among all those who attended high school their average years of education is 10.2 compared to 11.7 in the survey population.

- Single person households comprise a much higher percentage in the work registrant population than in the survey population (45 percent compared to 13 percent in the survey population) and a smaller average household size (2.4 compared to 3.2 in the survey population).

That the survey and E&T participant groups are predominantly female in contrast to both of statewide and McLennan County work registrant populations, is associated in part to the changes in exemption and voluntary policy in the demonstration. Exemption changes structurally affected the work registrant pool. Caretakers of children under six were no longer exempt; the age of dependent children had to be less than three years old to qualify for an exemption in BOND. Volunteer policy and the availability of child care may have attracted women with children to BOND. These situations may have resulted in a greater emphasis among the survey population on issues such as managing work and parenting, gender discrimination, and access to child care.

Personal Circumstances

Housing and Neighborhoods. Most participants were satisfied with their housing and neighborhoods, rating them as "very good" or "fairly good." Thirty-one participants lived in houses and nineteen lived in apartments, including public housing. Two respondents lived in trailers. A few participants were transient and sometimes homeless; two were currently living in an abandoned warehouse and a minibus. These latter were among the eight individuals (less than 15 percent) who rated their housing as "not very good" or "not good at all."

Most characterized their neighborhoods as decent, quiet, and safe, with good schools and recreational areas. Some neighborhoods had problems with drugs and crime, and respondents were concerned about personal safety and well-being, especially for their children.

Mobility. Participants were generally responsive to the idea of relocating in order to improve their employment prospects, but many felt unable or reluctant to do so because of family ties and financial constraints. Men were more receptive to relocation than women. Some identified poor local economic conditions as a reason to relocate. Participants had lived in Waco on average for 18 years.

I don't have the money to move right now. My family is here and their support is important. Until I get on my feet I need to stay here.

Transportation. Most survey participants considered their mode of transportation "fairly reliable." Access to transportation was not generally a barrier that prevented them from attending E&T activities or getting to and from the workplace. Thirty-five respondents had their own car; a few had access to a car that they could borrow; ten regularly used the city bus; some simply walked. A few who took the bus were concerned about service limitations.

My car gets me to work with no trouble.

You have to be on the job at 7 AM, and the city bus is not going to get you there on time.

Health. A large number of participants had personal health problem. Approximately one-third of them (32 percent and 35 percent in the first and second rounds, respectively) had personal health problems or conditions that affected them either all or most of the time, and made it hard for them to work. The most common health problems were diabetes, back injury, asthma, and allergies. Many also had a household member with health problems, some requiring considerable home care.

Education, Vocational Training and Work History

Education. The survey participants had a relatively high level of education. Thirty-eight (70 percent) had either a high school diploma or a GED. Four had some post secondary education and five had a college degree when they started BOND. Only four participants (7 percent) had attained less than the 9th grade.

Vocational Training. Slightly less than half of the first-round participants had previously taken at least one vocational training class; five had taken two classes and one had taken three. Twenty-one had completed such course work which included, in descending frequencies, cosmetology, nurse aid, truck driving, automotive repair, radio communication and electronics, computer technology, and welding. Fourteen participants had been employed in the field for which they were trained, some for considerable lengths of time. The average duration of this employment was 24 months (excluding a participant who worked for eight years and two who worked seven years in their fields of training). The highest number of placements were cosmetologists and nurse aids. Participants for the most part had received this training in the 1970's and 1980's.

Work History. Thirty-five first round participants (65 percent) had worked for

pay in the past three years; 19 had either worked without pay or not worked at all. Among these 35 participants with recent work efforts, 25 (71 percent) identified at least one other previous job and nine (26 percent) recalled at least three jobs, which collectively portray temporally extensive work histories (Table 2.4). Those who identified their third most recent job had been employed for an average of three years as a group and almost five years for male participants. Their average most recent job had lasted 23 months at 34.5 hours per week and paid an hourly wage of $5.63. Eleven of these most recent jobs (31 percent) had provided health insurance and a few provided additional benefits such as paid vacation, sick leave, and life insurance.

Table 2.4
Survey Participant Work Effort

	Most Recent Job			Prior Job 1			Prior Job 2		
	All	M	F	All	M	F	All	M	F
Total Employed	35	15	20	25	13	12	9	4	5
Average length (months):	23	27	21	17	16	17	36	59	18
Average hours per week:	35	36	34	36	37	35	31	28	33
Hourly wage ($):	5.63	6.37	5.14	5.53	5.79	5.27	4.85	5.75	4.49

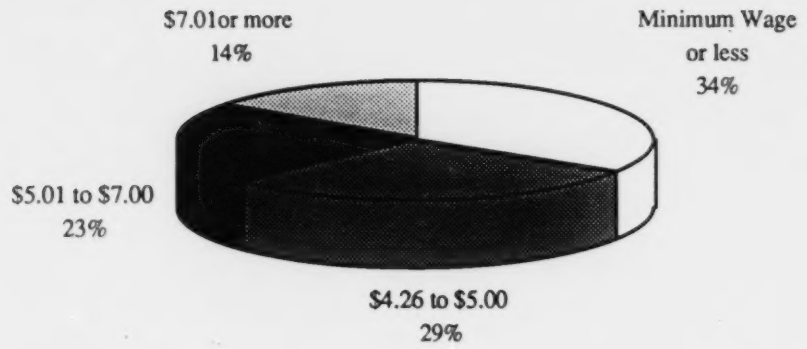
Source: 1994 Participant Survey

Gender differences surface in the work histories. The workforce participation rate was higher among men: 75% of male participants had been employed in the past three years compared to approximately 60% of the women in the survey. Wages were consistently lower for women. Compared to men in their most recent jobs, these women worked for lower pay in jobs that didn't last as long. In this three-year period, one-third of the jobs paid minimum wage or less, and almost two-thirds paid $5 dollar or under per hour (Figure 2.2).

Jobs were primarily in maintenance, cleaning, construction labor, factory work, and various restaurant/fast food positions. Some participants had better paying positions in teaching and sales. A few had recently held jobs as nurse aides and only one identified cosmetology: these were the fields participants reported as having the highest placements from past vocational training. This suggests that placements from vocational training

received in the 1970's and 1980's did not persist over time.

Figure 2.2
Recent Wage Distribution
N = 35



Source: 1994 Participant Survey

Thirteen participants (24 percent) had once worked without pay in order to get some job or career experience, mostly in the fields of health and child care. Only three felt volunteer work had been a useful experience. As a group, however, most participants were willing to consider unpaid work experience under certain circumstances, such as advancing their careers, changing careers, or simply getting experience.

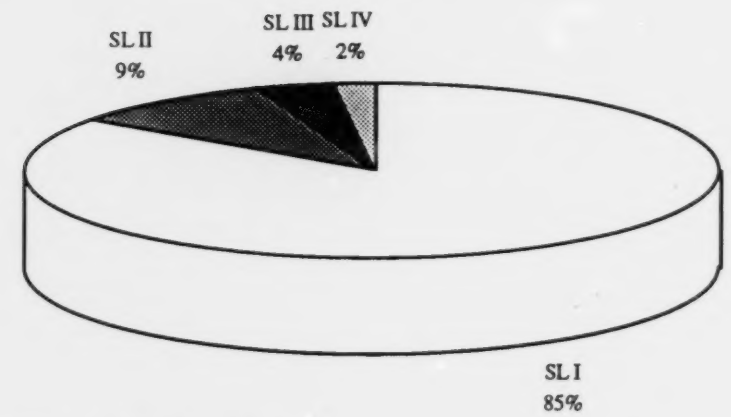
> *To go into another field, (unpaid work experience) would be worth it to get some training and experience, to enhance my knowledge.*

Programmatic Characteristics

Service Level. The Texas JOBS and E&T programs use a system of "triaging" clients to better target resources to participant needs. Service level designations are made on the basis of client-reported education, training and work histories during intake. Forty-six survey participants were Service Level I, the most job ready designation. Five were Service Level II, two Service Level III, and one Service Level IV. (Figure 2.4).[10]

[10]See footnote #6.

Figure 2.3
Service Level Designation



Source: 1994 Participant Survey

Participation Status. BOND participation was mandatory for most survey respondents: 41 were non-exempt, 13 were exempt. Eighteen participants, fully one-third, identified themselves as "volunteers." Case files indicated that these "volunteers" were equally split among mandatory and non-mandatory participants. Four of the nine exempt participants did not know that they were not required to participate.

Previous Job Training Program Associations. Thirteen survey respondents (24 percent) reported having participated in an employment and training program other than E&T prior to BOND. Eleven had completed these programs, eight of which were identified as JTPA programs. Others could not recall what the name of the program in which they had participated. None had ever been in the JOBS program. Six of the first round participants reported that they had previously been required to participate in the Food Stamps E&T program; one recalled participating in E&T twice.

Public and Other Outside Assistance

Public Assistance. Participants reported current spells of Food Stamps assistance that ranged from two months to 13 years (Table 2.5). The average spell was just over three years and was much higher among women than men (49 months to 15 months on average). Twenty-three participants (43 percent) had current spells of 12 months or less. 11 participants (20 percent) had current spells of five years or more.

As a group, postsecondary participants—at just over two years—reported shorter average current spells than other participants. Only one of thirteen postsecondary

participants had a current spell of five years or more, whereas ten of the forty-one non-postsecondary participants had spells that long. Almost half of the postsecondary group had received Food Stamps for less than one year.

Table 2.5
Current Food Stamps Spells by Group

	N	Average (Months)	Maximum (Months)	Minimum (Months)	12 months or less (%)	5 years or more (%)
Total	54	36.9	156	2	43	20
Postsecondary	13	25.2	60	5	46	8
Non-Postsecondary	41	40.6	156	2	41	24

Source: 1994 Participant Survey

A third of the participants had received AFDC in the past. The average duration of previous AFDC assistance was 32 months. Thirty participants, mostly women, had or were receiving Medicaid either for themselves or for their children. The average duration of Medicaid was 43 months.

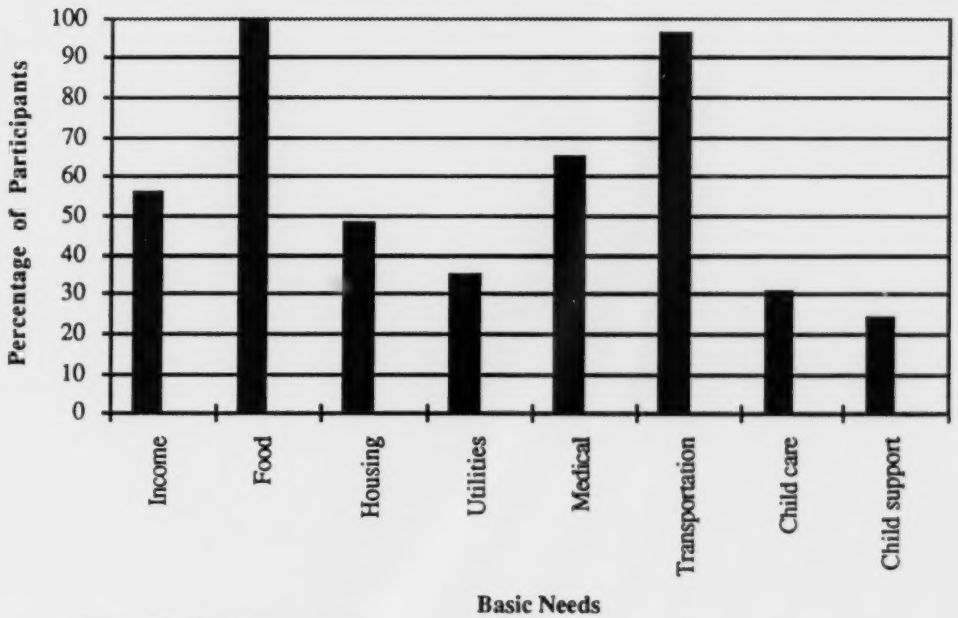
Other Outside Assistance. Participants identified outside assistance from public and private sources for eight basic needs: income, food, housing, utilities, medical care, transportation, child care, and child support, if relevant. They also assessed how well these basic needs were being met. Many received outside assistance in one or more of these needs areas (Figure 2.4).

Family and friends provided most income, housing and utilities assistance, but other public sources (student loans, disability payments, the Waco Housing Authority, and the Equal Opportunity Advancement Corporation, a local community service agency) also helped. Some reported occasional informal employment as an income source. Medical, food, transportation, and child care assistance came mainly through public assistance programs; the latter three were almost completely associated with BOND participation. As Figure 2.5 indicates, participants were not satisfied with income, medical assistance, and child support situations. Child care, housing, transportation, and food needs were being met "very well" or fairly well."

Health care was the greatest unmet need among the survey group. Only 33 percent had personal health coverage. Medicaid provided health coverage for most of the children. Only half of participants' spouses or partners had health coverage. Most

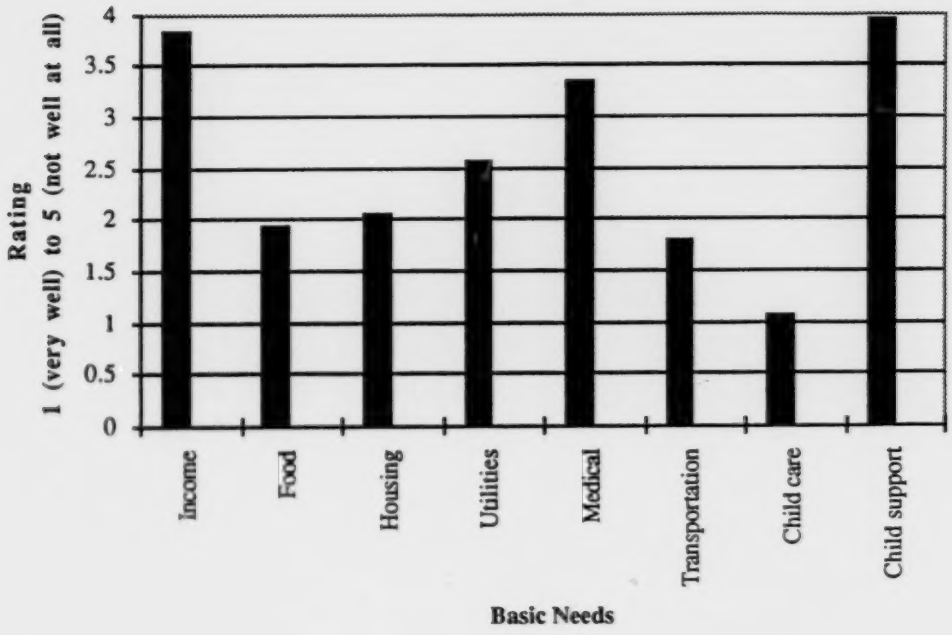
participants went to a community clinic for health care. Only a small number of participants had a family doctor, though slightly more had one for their children. An equal number either went to the emergency room or would not seek health care. For many, health care was an out of pocket expense they simply could not afford. Some were foregoing proper treatment of serious conditions such as diabetes; one woman was presently without prenatal care. Many felt the lack of sufficient health care compounded the effects of their poor health and worsened this barrier to employment.

Figure 2.4
Outside Assistance for Basic Needs
First Round



Source: 1994 Participant Survey

Figure 2.5
Ratings of Outside Assistance in Meeting Needs
First Round



Source: 1994 Participant Survey

III. RESULTS

Six months after the first-round interviews researchers conducted follow-up interviews. By that time, most of the original survey participants had either completed their program activities, found employment, or withdrawn from BOND. A few were still enrolled in adult or postsecondary education. The second-round interviews were designed to gather data about the BOND program's strengths and weaknesses from the participants' perspectives. Second-round interviews elicited their assessment of activities and services provided by BOND, the effects of policies applied in the demonstration, and the impacts of participation on their employability and other aspects of their personal lives. Correlated first and second-round results provide informal measures of the demonstration based on the experiences and perceptions of those for whom the program has provided education, training, employment, and support services.

General Perceptions

Purpose of BOND. Through two rounds of interviews, participants consistently held alternative perceptions of BOND's purpose. The participants enrolled in Life/Survival Skills, Job Readiness and Job Search components stated that the purpose of BOND was to assist them to secure and retain employment and to reduce their reliance on public assistance. They also thought that BOND activities were designed to improve their self-esteem and motivation. On the other hand, postsecondary students tended to see BOND primarily in terms of providing support services like child care and transportation that would help them to complete their education.

> *[BOND intends] to teach you better skills to prepare for a job and to get a job. It gives you self esteem, and you can pass it on to your children.*

> *BOND's main purpose seems to be to assist students here with child care and transportation, to ease the burden on the family.*

Reasons for Participation. Most survey participants were mandatory E&T participants, and many initially participated to protect their benefits. Once familiar with BOND, many stated that they would have participated voluntarily for a variety of reasons, citing the availability of child care, improving their career opportunities, finding a job, and attaining specific education objectives as reasons for participation. A few saw BOND as an opportunity to simply get out of the house; others said it helped them bring a sense of purpose and routine to their lives. For many, the social interaction was important. BOND also provided an attractive refuge from negative home environments or an occasional break from the demands of parenting. Others expressed concern about

the opportunity costs of participating in BOND, i.e., lost income from informal employment.

> *I figured BOND would help me advance and accomplish some goals in the job market where I haven't been able to do it, seemingly, on my own. People sometimes need the right nudge from the right people.*
>
> *I lose money when I come to BOND. When I'm here I can't be working.*

Job Goals and Expectations. Respondents were asked to identify their "ideal" and more "realistic" job goals, and the wages associated with them. They also rated their likelihood of getting these jobs within one year. Participants had a broad spectrum of job goals, reflecting their different levels of job skills and work experience. Despite this variety, most participants, especially those in postsecondary education, articulated reasonable job goals and appeared well-informed about the labor market.

Ideal Job. Clients favored professional and technical occupations over low-wage and service sector positions as ideal jobs. These included registered nurse, psychologist, computer programmer, and technicians in such high-technology fields as biomedicine and avionics. The expected average hourly wage for ideal jobs in the first round was $7.62 (Table 3.1). Women had lower wage expectations than men in their ideal jobs ($7.07 compared to $8.28).

Table 3.1
Wage Expectations
First Round

	Ideal Job Choice Wage			Realistic Job Choice Wage		
	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male
Average	$7.62	$7.07	$8.28	$6.37	$5.12	$7.94
Maximum	18.00	13.00	18.00	15.00	7.25	11.00
Minimum	3.50	3.50	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25

Source: 1994 Participant Surveys

Both male and female participants thought they were "fairly likely" to find their ideal jobs within a year. Participants based these projections on such factors as education and training, experience, labor market conditions, and motivation. The most important kinds of preparation participants thought they needed to attain these ideal jobs were

higher education, on-the-job training (OJT), and some work experience in their chosen field. This was followed by acquiring a certificate and job search skills.

Realistic Job. First-round participants identified jobs that closely resembled their recent work history (i.e. child care, clerical, factory work, and restaurant and fast food) as realistic jobs and believed they were "very likely" to get these jobs within one year. The average expected realistic wage was $6.37 per hour during the first round. There was gender disparity in realistic wage expectations also; women and men expected $5.12 and $7.94, respectively, a difference of approaching three dollars per hour. Nine of 11 participants who had expected realistic wages $5.00 or below were women.

Most first round respondents (63 percent) believed they were already adequately prepared for these realistic jobs before BOND. The remainder cited the need for basic education, OJT, and higher education, to prepare for their realistic jobs.

BOND's Influence on Job Goals and Job Expectations. Ideal and realistic job wage expectations increased among participants while in the BOND program, possibly suggesting a rise in confidence and ambition from program participation. The average hourly ideal wage expectation in the second round rose to $9.77 from $7.62 (Figure 3.1). The average realistic wage expectation rose to $8.41 during the second round from the first round average of $6.37. First and second-round average ideal and realistic wage expectations far exceed the average wage of $5.63 that clients reported in their recent work history.

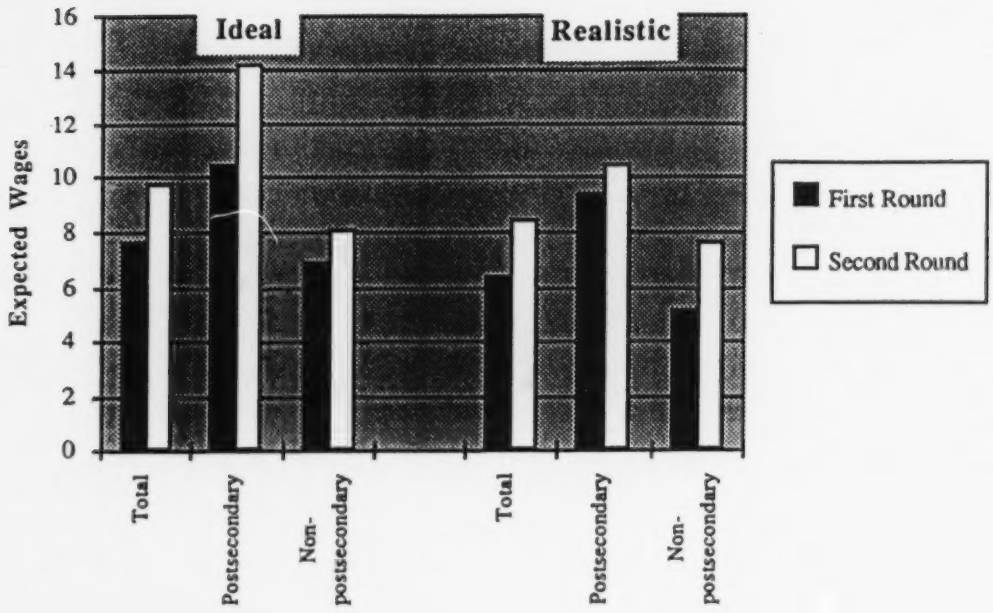
There was again a significant gender difference in wage expectations. The average ideal job wage expectation was $8.74 for women and $10.80 for men. The average realistic job wage expectation was $7.56 for women and $9.87 for men.

As did first-round respondents, second-round respondents reported that they were "fairly likely" to obtain their ideal jobs and "very likely" to get their realistic jobs within one year. Even among those who were unemployed at the time of the follow-up survey, most remained confident of their ability to obtain their realistic job. Higher education and vocational education were the most common kinds of preparation partieipants thought they needed to attain their ideal job. One-third of the second-round participants felt that they were adequately prepared for their realist jobs; the rest cited a variety of needs including licenses or certificates, higher education, vocational education, and continued help with job search.

Confidence and wage expectation results were probably influenced by the postsecondary participants at TSTC and MCC, who were most sure of finding a good job after completing their education. Their first-round average ideal job wage expectation of $10.44 rose to $14.16 in the second round; their average expected realistic job wage rose

to $10.50 from $9.42 in the first round (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1
First and Second Round Expected Wages



Source: 1994 and 1995 Participant Surveys

While the types of ideal and realistic jobs generally cited by survey participants did not change over the survey, there were qualitative changes in the second round responses. More participants showed greater certainty and were able to precisely identify job goals. Some did change the types of jobs they sought, explaining that they ha discovered or narrowed their interest while in BOND.

> *BOND heightened my goals and expectations and has made me more determined. The speakers [in job search] broadened my interests.*

Most participants believed that their experience in BOND had positively affected their job goals or expectations, even those whose job goals were already firmly set before entering BOND. Many felt that BOND had made them more prepared, confident, or motivated to attain their goals; BOND did not necessarily change them. Several remarked on drawing confidence from seeing others get jobs. Some participants reported discovering new goals in BOND through peer exchange or the wider exposure to the job market.

Barriers to Employment. Survey participants identified a range of employment

barriers that involved both personal and environmental factors, some of which could be addressed through BOND activities and services. Barriers are presented in Table 3.2. *Labor market conditions* includes several responses including "general economic conditions"; "unable to find a job that pays enough"; "no jobs in skill area"; and "no jobs in geographic area." *Other* encompasses "discrimination" (age, racial, gender); "criminal record;" "no tools;" "no phone;" and "too long out of the work force."

First-round and unemployed second-round participants were asked what prevented them from "finding a job right now?" Employed second-round participants were asked, assuming that they would like a better job, what prevented them from "finding one?" First-round responses clustered around *inadequate education*, *labor market conditions*, *disability/health problems*, and *inadequate job skills*. The first three of these persisted over the two rounds; only *inadequate job skills* diminished its presence. Of the three persistent barriers, BOND is designed to only address *inadequate education*; BOND does not address personal *disability /health problems* or *labor market conditions*. *Inadequate job search skills* and *inadequate language skills* were no longer cited as barriers by second-round participants. *Inadequate education* and *young children/child care* were consistently cited by women. The distribution of identified barriers among employed and unemployed second-round participants is relatively balanced (Figure 3.2).

BOND Policy and Procedures

Sanction Policy/Non-Compliance Situations. Participants generally understood the result of non-compliance. When first-round participants were asked, "What do you think the DHS office would do if you started skipping a few of your BOND program activities?" and "What do you think the DHS office would do if you completely stopped going to your BOND program activities?," the majority identified a range of responses that reflected the possible outcomes. These responses varied somewhat depending upon their participation status and household composition (Table 3.3).

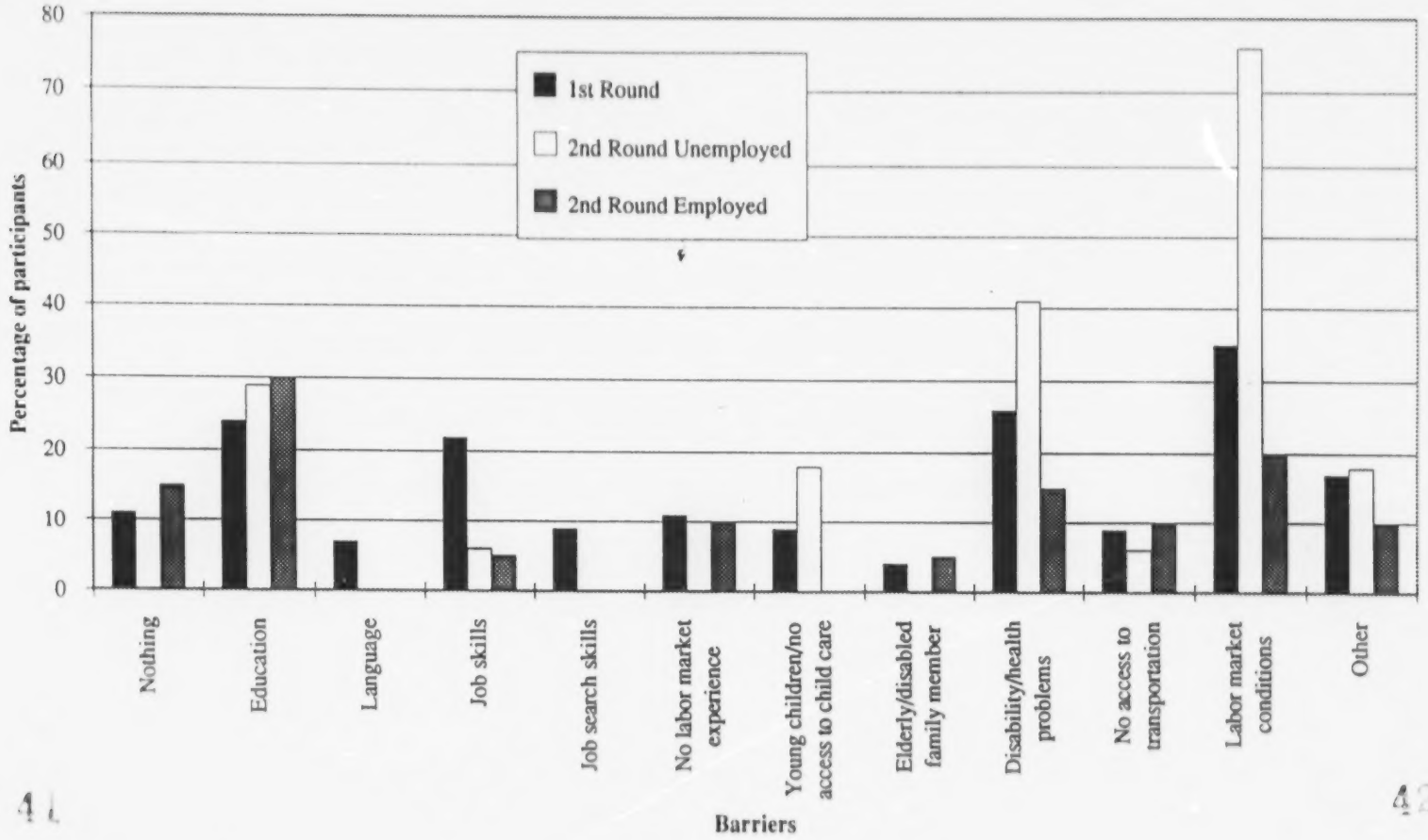
Unfortunately, several first-round participants revealed a weak understanding of sanction policy. Eleven didn't know how DHS would react to a few absences and another nineteen thought that the agency would stop all benefits. Most understood that complete non-compliance led to the loss of Food Stamp benefits and other benefits, yet eight remained uncertain of the action that would be taken for stopping co.npletely.

Table 3.2
Barriers to Employment: First and Second Rounds

	First Round N = 54			Second Round Unemployed N = 17			Second Round Employed N = 20		
BARRIERS	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**
Nothing	6	1	5	0	0	0	3	1	2
BOND CAN ADDRESS:									
Inadequate education	13	4	9	5	0	5	6	0	6
Inadequate language skills	4	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Inadequate job skills	12	4	8	1	0	1	1	0	1
Inadequate job search skills	5	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
No work/ labor market experience	6	1	5	0	0	0	2	0	2
BOND CANNOT ADDRESS:									
Young children/ no access to child care	5	0	5	3	0	3	2	0	2
Elderly/ disabled family member	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Disability/Health problems	14	9	5	7	4	3	3	1	2
No access to transportation	5	2	3	1	1	0	2	0	2
Labor market conditions	19	5	14	13	9	4	4	2	2
Other	9	4	5	3	1	2	2	1	1

Source: 1994 and 1995 Participant Surveys

Figure 3.2
Employment Barriers:
Distribution as Percentage of All Identifications



Source: 1994 and 1995 Participant Surveys

Actual non-compliance was rare among the participants. Few had trouble regularly attending BOND program activities (17 percent in the first round participants and 8 percent in the second round). Seven second-round participants reported being informed that they were about to lose their benefits because of non-compliance; two of these were for failure to respond to outreach. Only two reported actually having their benefits cut. A total of six second round participants were not able to complete all their scheduled activities; five had acceptable reasons, mainly health problems or family responsibilities.

Table 3.3
Participant Perceptions of Sanctions Policy
First Round

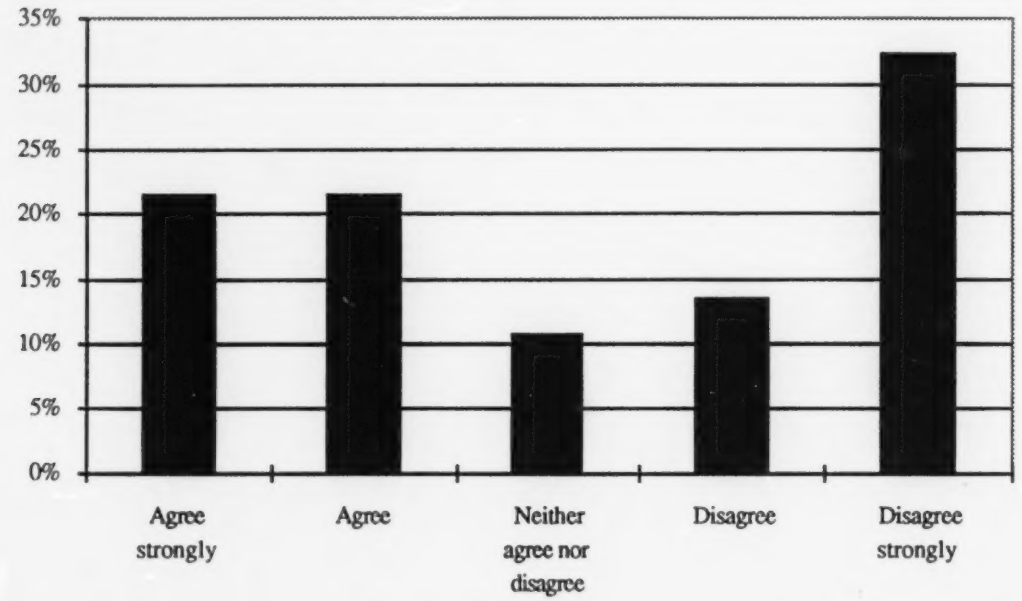
DHS Actions	Question 1: What do you think the DHS office would do if you started skipping a few of your BOND program activities?	Question 2: What do you think the DHS office would do if you completely stopped going to your BOND program activities?
Nothing	0	1
Cut off my Food Stamps	4	6
Cut off my family's Food Stamps	1	0
Offer a conciliation meeting	7	0
Give me another chance to attend	2	0
Reduce benefits	6	0
Terminate me from BOND but let me keep my Food Stamps	6	4
Stop all my benefits	19	36
Other (specify)	2	1
Don't know	11	8

To assess the effect of the sanctions policy on program participation, second-round participants were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following

statements:

- The potential loss of benefits motivated me to participate in the BOND.
- People would rather lose their benefits than participate in BOND.
- The potential loss of benefits motivated me to complete BOND.

Figure 3.3
The potential loss of benefits motivated me to participate in the BOND program.
N = 37

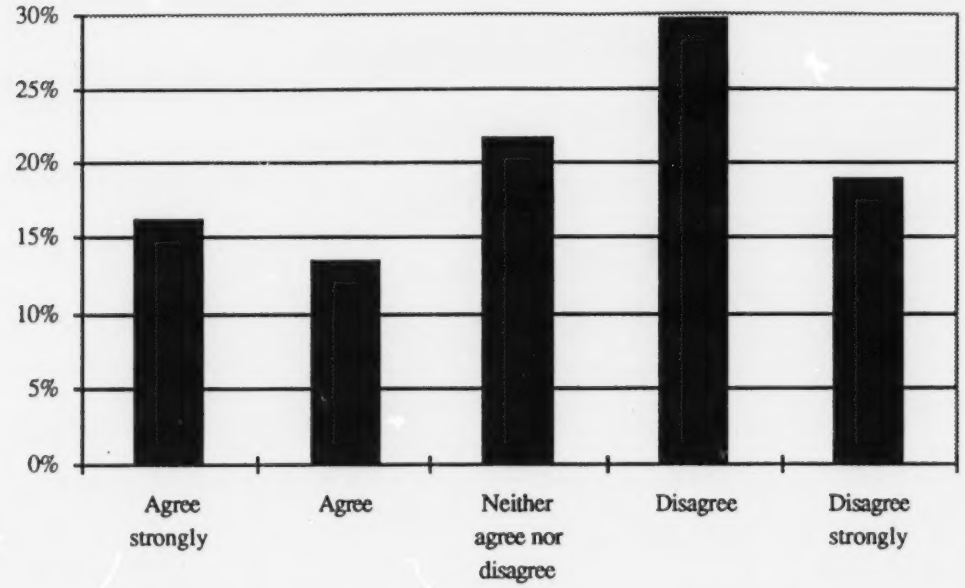


Source: 1995 Participant Survey

Respondents were almost evenly divided over the first statement (Figure 3.3). Although many said they came on their own accord, others initially responded to protect their benefits. Some felt that the extra push was necessary to overcome the emotional and psychological problems associated with unemployment.

> *I was originally told that I had to come. I'm not a self-starter, I used to be, but then I got depressed, I didn't want to do anything.*

Figure 3.4
People would rather lose their benefits than participate in BOND.
N = 37



Source: 1995 Participant Survey

Almost half of the participants disagreed with the second statement, suggesting that the sanction policy has a positive effect on participation (Figure 3.4). They thought the sanctions policy was an effective tool to get otherwise skeptical, work registrants into the program. Importantly, fully 30 percent of the respondents also acknowledged that there were individuals who would rather lose their benefits than participate.

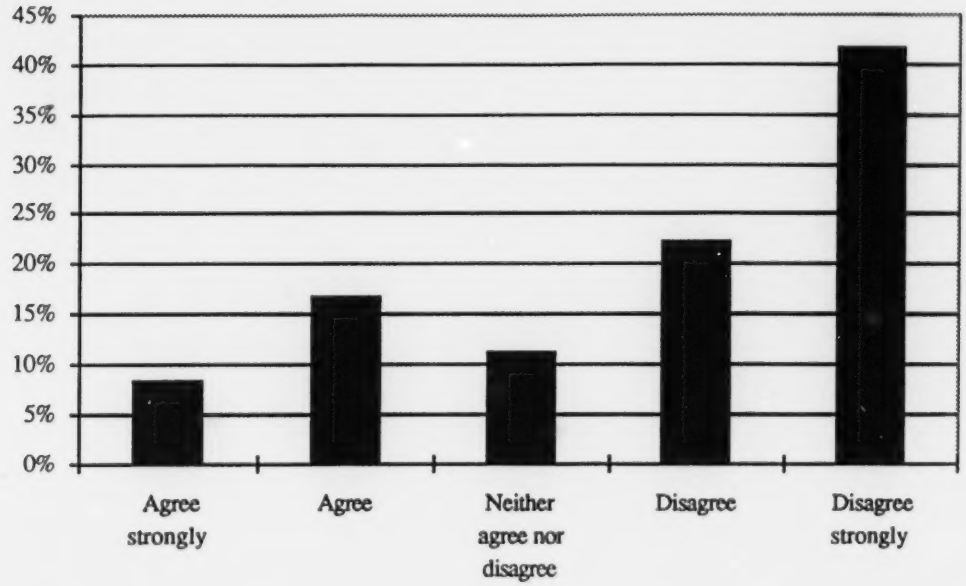
Some are only in BOND to protect their benefits.

Almost two-thirds of the participants disagreed with the third statement, a large proportion strongly so. These respondents asserted that their own determination motivated them to complete the BOND program (Figure 3.5). Notwithstanding, the threat of sanctions continued to motivate a sizable minority within the survey group.

After people are in BOND, they find out how good a program it is, and this changes their attitudes.

I was skeptical at first, but the longer I was in BOND, the better it was.

Figure 3.5
The potential loss of benefits motivated me to complete BOND.
N = 36



Source: 1995 Participant Survey

Case Management. Unlike regular E&T participants, BOND participants received either individual or group case management from workers in DHS Employment Services division. Over 80 percent of second-round participants reported that they had talked with their case managers about what they would be doing in BOND. Most clients described case managers as helpful and responsive, noting that case managers demonstrated an effective balance of concern and firmness. Almost all of these found their case managers accessible and receptive to their ideas about employment goals, and sensitive to their needs and circumstances. They felt comfortable with their case managers and thought they would help them work out any problems.

It is surprising that nearly 20 percent had no recollection of talking to their case managers. In some isolated cases, participants had conflicts with case managers, most frequently over the policy regarding participation hours. Most participants who received group case management showed a little confusion in distinguishing TEC facilitators from case managers.

Service Level Sorting. A few participants expressed concerned that the tracking of all "job-ready" clients through TEC core seminars, particularly Life Skills, was

inappropriate.

> *The problem is putting everybody in the same category. BOND needs a test to screen out people who don't need activities, especially life skills. A lot of time was wasted helping others. The pace was unfair.*

Volunteers. As mentioned earlier, one-third of the survey participants identified themselves as "volunteers," split among mandatory and non-mandatory participants. A few clients suggested an all-volunteer program so that clients who sought to benefit from BOND opportunities would not have to deal with the attitudes, particularly at orientation, of those who had no desire to participate.

> *It's good for people who want it.*
>
> *It's a real good program but not if you go merely to keep your benefits.*

Exemptions. Participants articulated no difficulties with BOND exemption policy. Thirteen exempt participants would not have had access to components or services under the regular E&T program.

Client Flow

BOND Outreach. Participants typically became aware of BOND when they or their spouse received a call-in notice from DHS. Several commented that the letter did not adequately portray the opportunities available in BOND; they found the initial DHS letter harsh in tone and not representative of the program's quality and approach. Many of those enrolled at MCC and TSTC were informed of BOND through their financial aid counselors; on-site case managers referred a few participants. Many thought the program was not well-publicized. Participants were aware of no other marketing effort. Several had mentioned the program to friends and encouraged them to participate.

> I feel the only thing I didn't like was when they first sent the letter. It was harsh, but they didn't tell what (BOND) was about.

Orientation. Several clients felt that orientation was chaotic; that clients who didn't want to be there disrupted the session and made it difficult for presenters. Some mentioned difficulty with parking and the orientation room itself. A few found orientation depressing and not representative of their later experiences in BOND.

> *There were too many people that didn't want to be there. That made it bad for everyone else. They were speaking out and trying to think of excuses to get out of it. They probably could have given more information if there hadn't been so much disruption.*

Service Planning. Client choice and knowledge of components often appeared weak. Most participants said they were not able to choose activities, and almost half of the second round participants said that no one had explained all the kinds of BOND activities in which they could take part. Clients rarely expressed frustration with the directed range of options presented during service planning.

Referral and Enrollment. Most "job-ready" clients recognized the value of BOND as a structured sequence of Life Skills, Job Preparation, and Individual/Group Job Search activities. Postsecondary students generally had clear educational or employment goals that BOND participation supported. Table 3.4 shows the enrollment in BOND activity components for survey participants.

Many first-round participants had been interested in volunteering for more activities, particularly OJT and Unpaid Work Experience. In the follow-up, few participants reported any difficulty getting into an activity, but some mentioned the lack of job skills training (for the non-college bound) and OJT.

Post-Program Assistance. Few participants received any type of post-program assistance. Case manager contacts with clients were limited to the employment and retention verification. Most respondents, nonetheless, felt satisfied that BOND had done enough. Some felt assured that BOND was there for them if they needed anything. A few, however, mentioned that the lack of follow up from case managers overshadowed many of the positive effects of the program.

Extended relationships between clients and case managers appeared to depend mostly on client initiative. Case managers were helpful when contacted by clients after the program. Some participants stayed in contact with TEC facilitators and DHS case managers to maintain friendships or to check on job listings. One respondent was asked to be a spokesperson to BOND classes.

They did everything. They just gave me the equipment so that I can do it myself.

Table 3.4
Enrollment in BOND Components

Component	All Survey Participants	Second-Round Participants
Total N	54	37
GED	12	12
ESL	1	0
Basic Education	1	0
Postsecondary Education	13	7
Job Preparation	25	16
Job Skills Training	0	0
Group Job Search/ Individual Job Search	27	14
Life Skills	30	20
Survival Skills for Women	8	8
On-the-Job Training	0	0
Unpaid Work Experience	4	3

Source: 1994 and 1995 Participant Surveys

BOND Program Activities and Services

Participant Component Evaluations. Participants were asked to evaluate BOND components a variety of ways. For those activities which they had completed or were currently enrolled in, first round respondents rated the value of the activity in general on a scale of one to five, with one being "very worthwhile" and five "not worthwhile at all." Almost all activities received high ratings. Among those with significant enrollments, GED, Postsecondary Education, and Survival Skills for Women were rated highest and Individual Job Search, the lowest (Table 3.5). Over 90 percent of the first round respondents thought they learned enough from the components to help get a job.

Second-round respondents again assessed their specific activities on a general scale. Their ratings paralleled those in the first round, except for Individual Job Search which went up in its average rating. The relatively low rating of life skills was largely due to a few participants giving the worst rating possible; most others gave very high ratings.

Table 3.5
Ratings of Components

Activity Component	First-Round Rating	Second-Round Rating
GED	1	1.3
Basic Education	1	n/a
ESL	3	n/a
Postsecondary Education	1.1	1.4
Job Preparation	1.5	1.6
Individual Job Search	3	2
Group Job Search	2	2
Survival Skills for Women	1	1.1
Life Skills	1.7	1.9
Unpaid Work Experience	1.3	1

Source: 1994 and 1995 Participant Surveys

First round respondents were also asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

- The BOND program will help me learn better job search skills.
- The BOND program will help me get the skills I need to find a good job.
- The BOND program will help me get the information/education I need to find a good job.

They generally agreed with all three of these statements and most strongly with

the third. A few respondents were neutral; only one or two disagreed, none strongly.

Second-round participants were asked similar statements; they agreed less. Most still thought BOND helped them in these areas, particularly with job search. However, about one-fourth felt that BOND did not provide them necessary job skills and one-third felt that BOND did not provide them the education needed for a good job.

Life Skills. The Life Skills seminar was the most controversial component. When asked which component was least helpful in finding a job, more than half of the second-round respondents who had been enrolled identified the Life Skills seminar. On the other hand, when asked which component helped them most in ways besides getting or keeping a job, more than a third identified this activity, noting benefits such as improved self-esteem, motivation, and communication skills. Many found the class very helpful, learning in such areas as assertiveness, goal setting, coping with stress, money management, and sex education.

> *Life Skills helped us to become ourselves instead of what pressures and failure make of us; (it helps us become) who we are supposed to be.*
>
> *Life Skills wasn't for me, but for many of the others, it really helped them.*

Others found the class degrading and insulting because of its apparent presumption of a low level of personal development. In some cases, it seemed to diminish participants' self-respect and put clients on the defensive.

> *To me it was a disgrace to sit there and listen to stuff that is common knowledge.*
>
> *They should figure out who needs the life skills and who doesn't. It was depressing for me to have to go through that.*
>
> *Need a test to screen out people who don't need life skills.*

Survival Skills for Women. The vast majority of the participants felt that the seminar would help them when they started looking for jobs, in the work place, and in their personal and family life. When asked which component helped them most in ways besides getting or keeping a job, all but one of the women who had participated identified this component. Participants valued lessons in assertiveness training, self-esteem and confidence building, conflict-resolution, and peer support.

> *Survival Skills provided a supportive environment where women could meet other women from similar and different backgrounds to discuss women's issues.*

Job Preparation. Participants rated job preparation as the most helpful component for getting a job, as well as for keeping a job. Benefits identified included

help with writing resumes and interviewing skills. Respondents also stated that classes effectively addressed workplace issues such as conflict resolution, working with others, teamwork, interpersonal skills, and sexual harassment. The most often-mentioned job preparation topics were proper attitude and work habits. Suggestions for improvement included: more employers as guest speakers, a wider representation of industries, and more information about the kind of jobs available.

Group/Individual Job Search. BOND provided training in job search techniques and monitored participants to ensure that they fulfilled a program obligation to make a stipulated number of job contacts. Participants drew confidence from seeing their peers find work, knowing that they could also perform at the same level. Criticisms highlighted the need for more information and insight into a greater variety of jobs, more job development and better job leads.

> *They need more employers to come in. They also need films to show the kinds of jobs available. [BOND should provide] more information and insight into positions.*

Adult Education. Participants valued adult education (GED, Basic Literacy, ESL) as a necessary step to employment or higher education. Incremental success in coursework and eventual attainment of a GED gave participants a sense of accomplishment and boosted their self-esteem.

> *GED helped me a lot to build my confidence. At first , I hardly spoke at all. Now I feel like I can say things.*

Postsecondary Education. Postsecondary participants rated this component as very good, very confident that it was closely tied to good prospects in the labor market. Despite averages of more than eleven and twelve years of education for women and men, respectively, participants consistently associated higher education with preparing for and obtaining better jobs.

> *They almost guarantee me a job at TSTC. The bulletin board is full. [Mechanics] are in high demand. Employers are impressed with the Associate's degree.*

Unpaid Work Experience. Although enrollment in the Unpaid Work Experience component was low, participants in UWE rated this component as "very good," stating that it gave them experience in their field of interest. Many first-round participants expressed a willingness to participate in UWE. Those that did, had positive experiences.

Other Components. Many participants thought that better job development and placement services, access to OJT, and access to Job Skills Training could improve

BOND. Some felt that BOND needed to place more clients — including hard-to-serve clients — in workplace environments through OJT and UWE. These opportunities were considered essential to building their labor market viability.

Support Services. Most participants stated that the support services they received from BOND met all of their expectations. They considered support services such as child care and transportation an important part of the BOND program.

Child Care. The participants who have children in their households (about two-thirds of the sample) gave compelling narratives of the difficult challenge of managing both work (and/or school) and family responsibilities. BOND support for child care greatly enhanced the capacity of many of these parents to meet that challenge. Child care assistance was provided to 15 of the 29 survey participants with young children (12 years old and under). Thirteen of these were women, seven of whom were married. Almost all participants with child care through BOND (14 of 15) placed their children in a full-day, licensed child care facility. Most of those without BOND child care left their children with family members in their own home.

A number of first round participants were worried that they would not be able to afford full-day, licensed care when they left the BOND program. Some strongly noted that AFDC participants in BOND received transitional child care assistance and that this was not available to Food Stamp-only participants.

> *We might have to cut back on the amount of time the kids are in daycare [after I finish BOND]. We have no fallback.*

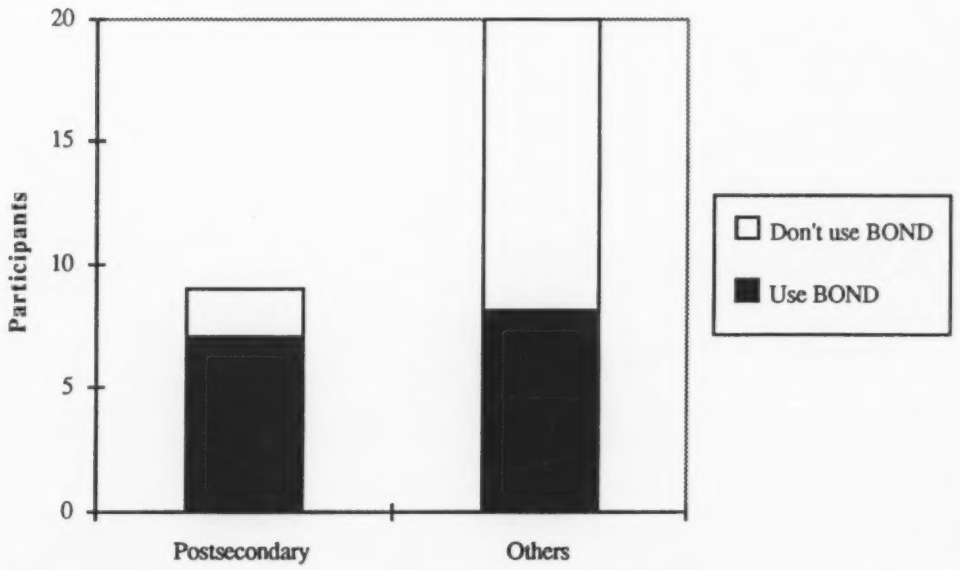
Second round participants, however, tended to believe more strongly that they would be able to afford it. Nine of 15 second round participants who needed child care to take a full-time job after BOND thought they would be able to afford full-day licensed child care. Five of these were already out of BOND and three had arranged full-day licensed care. This possibly points to their favorable experience with these facilities while in BOND and a greater determination to continue to keep their children in this kind of environment, despite financial constraints. It also may reflect the successful efforts of the local Child Care Management System contractor, EOAC, to locally raise money for income-eligible child care.

Nevertheless, the issue of affordability was critical to participants. If confronted with the problem of unaffordable child care, some said they would turn to family members or ex-spouses paying child support to try to cover the expense, and a few said they would not be able to work.

I can't afford to keep kids in daycare: jobs don't pay enough. I can't understand how they'll pay child care for me to go to school, but not to go to work and get off Food Stamps.

Child care appears associated with voluntary and postsecondary participation. Nine of the eighteen "volunteers" (twelve of whom had young children) had child care through BOND. Seven of these nine were exempt volunteers. More than 75 percent of all postsecondary participants with young children used BOND child care, compared to 40 percent of those in all other components. (Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6
Use of BOND Child Care by Group
(Participants with Children 12 Years Old and Under)



Source: 1995 Participant Survey

Transportation Assistance. Virtually all participants received transportation assistance from BOND. The average amount was $2.11 per day, ranging between $5.00 and $1.00. Most participants said that this assistance was sufficient to cover their needs while in BOND.

Other Support Services. Other support services were not well-publicized and therefore not frequently accessed. One-half of the participants without a high school education or GED were not informed that BOND would pay for GED fees. Only about 40 percent were aware of one-time, work-related expense reimbursements (up to $65).

Transitional Support. Participants consider the quality, affordability, and availability of post-program child care and health care potentially formidable barriers to job retention. Some participants said they would have to quit work in order to take care of their children; one had already done this before BOND. Another respondent in a two-earner household said his spouse would have to stay at home since the income would not justify the cost of child care.

> *It wasn't worthwhile working—the money was going to child care.*
>
> *The loss of child care at the end of the program is very scary. For an easier transition, the government needs to do something about daycare.*
>
> *They should provide child care alone so people don't need Food stamps or AFDC to be able to use it.*

Outcomes

In general, participants were very satisfied with the BOND program, identifying a broad spectrum of benefits. Some had found jobs, others had advanced or completed their education, and others noted less tangible program outcomes. Overall, the vast majority of the second round participants believed that BOND had accomplished its purpose (81 percent) and that the services from BOND had met all of their expectations (76 percent). Most participants agreed strongly that it had made a difference in their lives. Moreover, program benefits were not limited to the participants themselves, but also spread to family members and friends.

> *BOND is positive, a great learning experience for anyone, if they're willing to accept the amount of time they have to put in. If they accomplish that, there's nothing they can't accomplish.*
>
> *It's helped me build my confidence. It's done a lot, mentally and emotionally.*

Employment. Nearly half of the second round participants reported that they had found a job since starting the BOND program. Seventy-five percent of these thought that their participation in BOND helped them get these jobs. Client and case manager contacts revealed an additional five employment entries among the survey group.

BOND activities and services that were beneficial to employment entry included lessons in motivation and assertiveness, resume writing, job search and interviewing techniques. Second round participants rated both job preparation and postsecondary education as the most helpful components for getting a job.

Average earnings for these new jobs were below the average wages in the survey sample's recent work history. The average new job paid an hourly wage of $5.08 for a 35 hour week. This is below the average wage of $5.63 for their most recent jobs in the

three years before BOND. The average wage was $4.84 for women and $5.55 for men. Benefits were virtually non-existent. One job provided full benefits, one only health, and two intended to provide full benefits after a six month probationary period.

Participants mostly found work in the service sector. The types of employment included electronics technician, telemarketing, retail sales, warehouse, laundry, restaurant and fast food, construction labor, and recreation aide.

Half of those employed felt that their present job offered a good opportunity for advancement within a year. Employment entry in several cases, despite low wages, gave BOND participants access to internal labor markets. Some participants remarked on such advantages as access to company bulletin boards and were confident of advancement despite the nature of their present job.

On the other hand, many other participants noted problems with the unstable nature of the local labor market and had concerns about the quality of jobs that BOND emphasized.

> *I get the feeling that they [BOND] wanted people to like jobs that paid minimum wage.*

Employment Retention. Most participants valued work and believed that they had learned useful tools and habits for keeping a job, but were anxious about their prospects for employment security. These lessons mainly related to getting along with others at work and meeting the employer's expectations of work attitudes and discipline. Eight participants lost jobs during the survey period. Four of these were jobs found after starting BOND, four were jobs participants had when they started BOND.

> *Work is better than welfare.*

Worries over lack of benefits, potential conflicts with employers about health problems or family needs, and low pay caused many participants to doubt their viability in the local labor market, despite the job search and retention skills learned through BOND.

> *The minimum wage should go up.*

These concerns contrast with the confidence of the post secondary participants who are not confined to the local labor market. In fact, they recognize the need to move elsewhere for jobs.

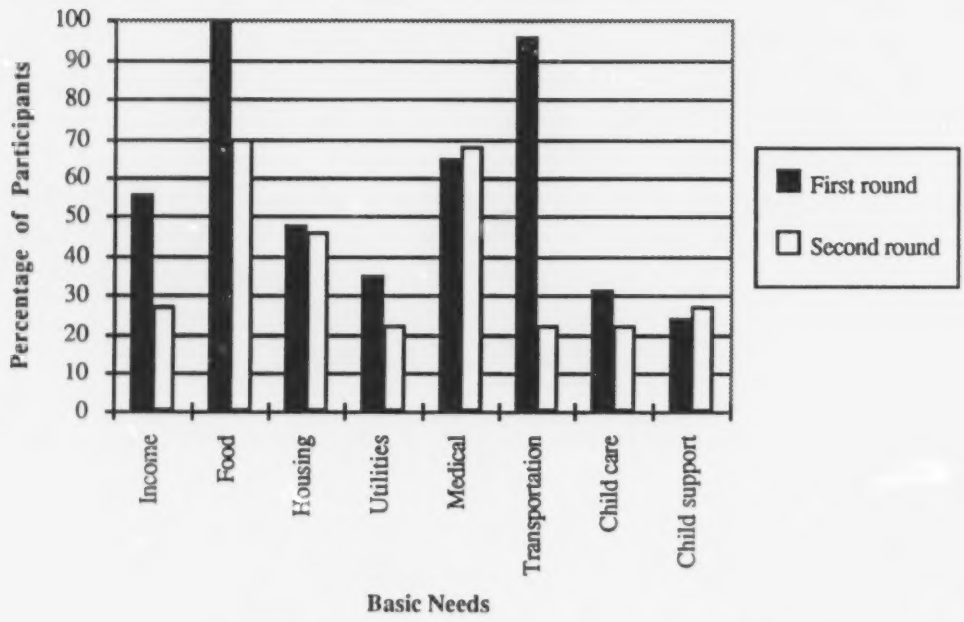
Movement Towards Economic Self-Sufficiency. As a group, participants have not advanced swiftly toward increased capacity for economic self-sufficiency. Although

participants varied considerably in their conception of self-sufficiency, placement wages have fallen far below client-identified, self-sufficiency thresholds. Asked how much they would need to live "comfortably without any outside help," first round participants identified an average hourly wage of $8.08; second-round participants identified an average hourly wage of $11.08. This was lower than the average wage first round participants expected to earn after finishing BOND ($8.38), but still far exceeded their average placement wage of $5.05 per hour.

Moreover, participants were emphatic that job-provided benefits, especially health care, were vital to their movement to self-sufficiency. Health was the most important benefit, with dental, retirement, and paid vacation next in importance. Unfortunately, less than a handful expected to receive any such benefits in their current jobs.

It's not so much the money, so long as there are good benefits.

Figure 3.7
Outside Assistance for Basic Needs

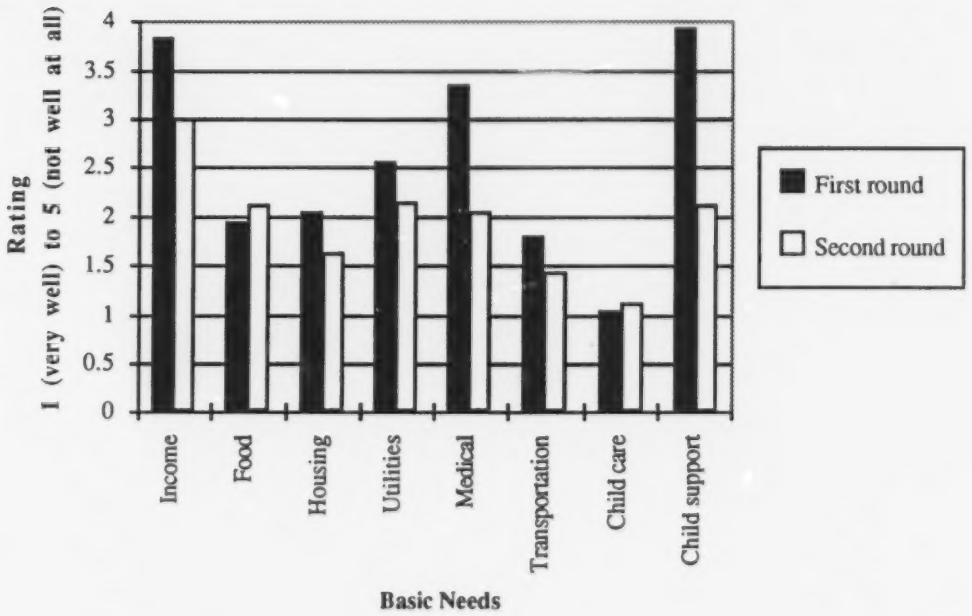


Source: 1994 and 1995 Participant Surveys

As Figure 3.7 reveals many survey participants continue to receive outside assistance to meet selected basic needs, particularly with food, housing, and health care. The reduction over the survey period in the percentage of participants who received

income, food, and transportation assistance is associated with BOND. Almost all had been receiving transportation assistance from BOND. The reduction in income assistance is probably indicative of the work efforts of participants or their spouses. The drop in food assistance is associated with lower Food Stamp benefits. Some had been denied Food Stamps or had their benefits lowered because of increased household income. A few had simply not reapplied for benefits. Eighteen second round respondents were still receiving Food Stamps. Figure 3.8 suggests that second-round participants are meeting these basic needs slightly better than first-round participants.

Figure 3.8
Rating Outside Assistance for Basic Needs



Source: 1994 and 1995 Participant Surveys

Education and Training. Four of the 12 original students had completed the GED by the second round of interviews. Four were still progressing in classes; the others had dropped out due to medical or personal reasons. Nine of the 13 postsecondary students were making progress toward a degree; two had already graduated and found employment in their fields, while two had dropped out.

Five second-round participants had completed training courses and received certificates in caregiving, nurse's aide, home medical equipment or pharmacology. Three

found work in their skills area. One began through unpaid work experience in BOND, received training while working, and subsequently was given a paid position.

> *People need the GED to go to college to make something of themselves. At least you could say I accomplished something, made something of myself, instead of sitting around. Seeing me get my GED might get my two daughters to get theirs.*

Intangible Personal and Social Gains. When asked to identify program benefits, most participants gave expansive, reflective answers that emphasized less tangible personal and social gains than more quantifiable improvements in education and employment. These wide-ranging benefits included: strengthening their self-esteem and confidence; improving their skills and capacity for more enriched family relationships and better household management; instilling greater confidence in social interaction and group learning; and, giving a sense of routine and purpose to their lives.

> *Before I came here I was at home most of the time. It was getting to where I was afraid to go out, afraid to go to an interview. I was afraid to be turned down. I wasn't used to failure. So it's good to be here.*

Participants most often mentioned the BOND staff's encouragement of peer learning and teaching. This encouragement established an atmosphere of trust and mutual concern that stimulated creative thinking and open exchange.

> *Being around other people has an effect on me. I'm a loner, but when I get pulled into a group, it replenishes me.*

> *The facilitators really got me into it. You meet people with the same problems as you have.*

These were important yet intangible gains that are obviously difficult to measure, but no less vital to the program's mission to move clients toward economic self-sufficiency. For example, they lead to improved relationships at home and better parenting skills that can aid individuals in the difficult challenge of managing the dual responsibility of work and household.

> *The lesson on [assertiveness] is very helpful for dealing with children. Let them know they can't run over me.*

Participants believed BOND was having a very positive effect on them and their families. One positive effect was simply the intrinsic value of a job to alleviate the problems associated with unemployment. BOND generates important spillover effects. Some respondents suggested that their improvement through BOND might impress spouses/partners or friends to improve their lives in the same way.

Lack of a job can cause a lot of stress in the household.

Intergenerational Effects. Most respondents said their BOND participation will benefit their families by allowing them to meet their children's needs better and to provide a positive example for their children. Participants remarked on their children's improved motivation to learn and, in some cases, their attainment of better grades. The act of learning itself drew families together. Many also referred to the beneficial value of the child care they were receiving through BOND.

> *I will be able to provide a little more materially for my girls, to give them a better life, and give them a role model.*
>
> *What I learn here I can take home and help my kids, so they have knowledge of what I'm learning. We test each other on the course material.*
>
> *BOND child care puts them in a social situation and prepares them for school, both educationally and socially.*

IV. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey participants provided descriptive and experiential data that highlight several aspects of the BOND demonstration. The data portray the wide ranging demographic features, work histories, and personal circumstances among E&T participants; provide informal measures of BOND's ability to address the needs and employment barriers of this diverse population; partially reveal the extent to which BOND has attained its program objectives and expectations; and provide a basis for policy recommendations to improve the service delivery model from the participants' point of view.

Diverse Population

The survey participants portray the broad range of individual needs and circumstances found among a cross-section of working and non-working individuals and their families in the E&T population. Some have limited education and have been out of the work force for years; others have college degrees and have recently lost higher-wage positions. For individuals with health and disability problems, households which do not qualify for or are reluctant to go on AFDC, and those who are working, but remain too poor to meet their families' basic needs, Food Stamps are part of their subsistence survival package. For others, Food Stamps are a source of relief in times of temporary need. Whether married, single or divorced; with or without children; living in comfortable homes or abandoned buildings; healthy or partially disabled; these people found themselves in need of assistance to meet their food needs and were directed to activities and services designed to help them meet those needs independently.

The survey data revealed several features of the participant group:

- Two-thirds of the participants had worked recently at jobs that had lasted almost two years and paid $5.63 per hour on average; the other one-third had not worked for pay at any time during three years prior to the interview.
- Seventy percent had high school diplomas or the equivalent and nearly ten percent had college degrees, yet another seven percent had not advanced beyond eighth grade.
- Roughly forty percent had been previously enrolled in a vocational training class and two-thirds of these individuals had worked in the field for which they had been trained.
- Almost two-thirds of the participants—about equally split between two-parent and female, single-parent families—had dependent children of various ages in their households. The participants with children had on average two children per

household; no household had more than three children. Overall, about 40 percent were married, 30 percent divorced, and 30 percent single, never married.

- Most live in dwellings and neighborhoods that were acceptable to them, and had access to fairly reliable modes of transport.

- Approximately one-third of the participants had personal health problems or conditions that affected them either all or most of the time, and made it hard for them to work.

- Participants reported current spells of Food Stamps assistance that ranged from two months to 13 years. The average spell was just over three years and was much higher among women than men (49 months to 15 months on average). More than two-fifths had current spells of 12 months or less, and one-fifth of the participants had current spells of five years or more.

- One-third had previously received AFDC and more than two-fifths, mostly women had received Medicaid for themselves or their children. As a group they depended on outside assistance to meet many of their basic needs, including food, shelter, and most importantly, medical assistance.

The BOND demonstration attempted to address the employment, education, training, and support service needs of this diverse group. This reflects the extent to which BOND has moved E&T away from narrow labor force attachment towards a more individualized and comprehensive workforce development strategy. In doing so, the demonstration has contributed to the development not only of human capital, but also of social capital. Participants have identified strengths, as well as weaknesses, in the developmental processes.

Informal Measures

Most survey participants felt that BOND has enhanced their employability due to education, training, and job readiness/job search activities, and improved self-esteem, motivation, and communication skills, especially among those who felt isolated by poverty and personal hardships. Nevertheless, experiences, perception, and outcomes of BOND are as varied as the personal circumstances and employment barriers of E&T population.

Program Purpose. Overall, the vast majority of the second-round participants believed that BOND had accomplished its purpose and that the services from BOND had met all of their expectations. Most participants agreed strongly that it had made a difference in their lives. Program benefits were not limited to the participants themselves, but spread to family members and friends also.

Employment. Nearly half of the second round participants reported that they had

found a job since starting the BOND program. Three-quarters of these thought that their participation in BOND helped them get these jobs.

Job Goals. Most participants believed that their experience in BOND had positively affected their job goals or expectations. While the types of jobs generally sought by survey participants did not change over the survey, more individuals showed greater certainty and were able to precisely identify their job goals in the second round. Those who did change the types of jobs they sought explained that they had discovered or narrowed their interest through peer exchange or the wider exposure to the job market while in BOND.

Employment Barriers. Participant responses indicated that BOND has had some effect on reducing *inadequate job skills* and *inadequate job search skills*, two employment barriers addressed by the program design. Other persistent barriers clustered around *inadequate education*, *labor market conditions*, and *disability/health problems*. Of these, BOND was designed to only address *inadequate education*, which may have actually increased as clients became more aware of the links between education and better jobs. *Young children/child care* was a barrier consistently cited by women.

First round respondents were generally certain that BOND would teach them better job search skills, and provide the job skills, information and education that they needed to find a good job. Most second-round participants still thought BOND helped them in these areas, particularly with job search, but less strongly so. About one-fourth felt that BOND did not provide them necessary job skills and one-third felt that BOND did not provide them the education needed for a good job. That inadequate job skills was reduced as a barrier may reflect the increased confidence in job-gaining ability associated with BOND, not increased acquisition of the skills necessary to get a better job.

Outside Assistance. Although the total percentage of respondents who tapped some form of outside assistance dropped among second-round participants, many continue to receive outside assistance to meet selected basic needs, particularly with food, housing, and health care. Responses did indicate that BOND may have helped them meet these basic needs better overall.

BOND Objectives and Expectations

Participants indicated some of the successes and the limits of the demonstration in attaining its more formal objectives and expectations. BOND was designed in part to:

- To provide Food Stamp E&T participants expanded and enhanced activity components and support services
- To increase client participation through a clear sanction policy
- To target resources based upon participant need
- To increase participant capacity for self-sufficiency

Activities and Services. Clients generally valued the activities and services which BOND provided. In particular, they recognized that BOND improved their job preparation and search skills, encouraged and enabled them to attend postsecondary and GED classes, and helped them by providing child care and transportation assistance.

Life Skills. Life Skills was controversial. More than half of the second-round respondents who had been enrolled identified the Life Skills seminar as the least helpful activity for finding a job. Alternatively, one third identified this activity, as most helpful in ways besides getting or keeping a job, noting benefits such as improved self-esteem, motivation, and communication skills.

Survival Skills for Women. Participants felt that Survival Skills would help them when they started looking for jobs, in the work place, and in their personal and family life. Among women who had participated in this component, all but one identified it as most helpful in ways besides getting or keeping a job.

Job Preparation. Participants rated Job Preparation as the most helpful component for getting a job, as well as for keeping a job. Positive experiences included help with writing resumes and interviewing skills. The most frequently recalled topics were proper attitude and work habits.

Group/Individual Job Search. Participants drew confidence from seeing their peers find work, knowing that they could also perform at the same level. Job search was least popular among those who did not find work. Criticisms highlighted the need for more information and insight into a greater variety of jobs, more job development, and better job leads.

Adult Education. Participants valued adult education as a necessary step to employment or higher education. Incremental success in course work and eventual

attainment of a GED gave participants a sense of accomplishment and boosted their self-esteem.

Postsecondary Education. Postsecondary and other participants consistently associated higher education with preparing for and obtaining better jobs.

Despite the value placed on these activities, many participants without advanced education or training recognized, or experienced first-hand, their weak viability in the labor market. They thought that better job development and placement services, access to OJT, and access to Job Skills Training through BOND would increase their employment prospects. Some felt that BOND needed to place more clients, including hard-to-serve clients, in work place environments through OJT and Unpaid Work Experience. Some were not well-informed of program options. Others questioned the logic of providing child care assistance to help them prepare for jobs, but not to keep their job, if they found one.

Sanctions and Participation. The participants suggested that not only sanctions but opportunity and perceived benefits drove participation. Many would have volunteered if they had known more about BOND. The impact of sanctions alone on their participation varied; few survey participants actually went into non-compliance.[11] The threat of losing benefits may have stimulated initial BOND participation, but this effect appears to have had less weight over the duration of the program, as participants began to register personal benefits from participation. Participants also suggested that some individuals would rather lose their Food Stamps benefit than participate; one emphatically noted the displacement of work and income because of BOND. Nevertheless, sanctions remained an important catalyst for participation for a sizable minority.

Resource Targeting. BOND improved resource targeting for E&T participants by providing more component options per service level and allowing participants to explore service planning options with case managers and facilitators. Allowing clients to volunteer was perhaps the most effective way of matching client needs and expectations with program options. Fully one-third of the survey group voluntarily participated to improve their wage-earning potential, to reduce their need for public assistance, or to get support services that enabled them to approach their employment goals.

Still, participants pointed out problems with group activities organized primarily

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[11]Most sanctions requests are initiated as a result of failure to respond to outreach. Those persons most likely to receive sanctions were least likely to be surveyed, since initial contact was established only with those individuals who were actually participating in BOND.

by service level. Some clients noted that variations in personal development and job readiness within the service levels group caused tension among participants, especially in life skills and core seminars.

Self-sufficiency. Improved job search skills, education achievement, increased decision-making skills, and heightened self-esteem and motivation are probably associated with improved participant capacity for self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, as a group, the rewards of labor market participation appear to leave many participants below their self-reported, self-sufficiency wage. Most employment entries of survey participants have been similar to their pre-program experiences—low-wage jobs in which turnover and absenteeism are high and benefits such as health insurance and sick leave virtually non-existent.

Indicative of their differing life situations when entering BOND, survey participants left BOND belonging to a hierarchy of groupings along the path to self-sufficiency. Each group is characterized by different gains in labor force attachment and employability. Individuals with relatively good work histories, education, or work skills improved their marketing skills but still may lack employment security in today's competitive labor markets. Many need postsecondary education and advanced vocational training in order to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

The furthest from self-sufficiency are those with health problems bordering on disability who may have become more "job-ready" through BOND, but whose health barriers make any labor market success vulnerable. Such clients may benefit from careful job development services to assure their placement in appropriate work environments, as well as continuing case management and access to health care.

In between are individuals with limited work histories who developed a stronger labor force attachment through BOND. Less tangible benefits (self-esteem, social interaction, household management, etc.) combined with job readiness/job search skills helped them to find jobs. However, as they begin work in the lower rungs of the labor market, these gains are likely to be fragile without continuing educational and skills upgrading. This group could benefit from work-based learning opportunities, job skills training, and, possibly, extended case management and child care assistance.

Policy Implications.

The voices of the survey participants combine to deliver "messages" for policy makers to:

- Encourage voluntary participation
- Value less tangible program outcomes as well as standard program outcome measures of employment and earnings
- Provide access to substantive job skills training, work experience, and higher education
- Expand and more effectively market the opportunities of enhanced E&T activities and services statewide
- Recognize persistent barriers beyond scope of the BOND program design, including labor market conditions and post-program child care.

Voluntary Participation. Participants were emphatic that effective participation depended on having a positive attitude, that only those who wanted to participate would benefit and that those who didn't want to were likely to be disruptive. Participants noted the centrality of peer learning and teaching in the program, the "bonding" that occurred in the job readiness seminars. Many strongly believed that the program should be voluntary and that such a policy would improve program effectiveness.

Intangible Benefits. Many participants described program outcomes that are less visible than education and employment gains but no less important. Improvements in self-esteem, social skills, group learning and teaching, and punctuality are desirable workforce qualities. BOND seminars and other components provided a forum for social interaction and presented pathways to more productive alternatives to their current lifestyles for many participants. Additionally, participants noted BOND's positive effect on their children and families. Most respondents said their BOND participation helped them to meet their children's needs better and to provide a positive example for their children.

Access to Advanced Education and Training. Survey participants recognized that better access to job skills training for the non-college bound, substantive work experience, and higher education would increase their chances of eliminating barriers and obtaining better job opportunities.

Statewide Coverage. Participants strongly supported statewide extension of the BOND model. Most felt that BOND had been beneficial to them, that similar folk with

social or employability deficits in other areas of Texas could also benefit. Better marketing of available opportunities would draw participants to the program.

External Barriers. Labor market conditions and health/disability problems are persistent client-identified barriers to employment Participants hoped that policy makers would address external labor market conditions in order to improve program outcomes. They noted the need for more and better real job opportunities and felt that BOND staff should expand job development and placement efforts. Individuals with children needed access to affordable child care as a pre-condition for expanding their work effort. Several individuals needed help with health and disability problems that were beyond the resource range of BOND.

Recommendations

Participant survey results provide a basis for additional policy considerations related to expanding a model similar to BOND to other areas of Texas. Based on participant experiences, perceptions, and initial outcomes of BOND, future programs designed to serve a broad and diverse group of working and non-working poor should:

- Recognize job market realities faced by participants, i.e., declining wages for lower-skilled, less-educated workers
- Support peer and lifelong learning
- Retain the flexibility to address individual needs and circumstances
- Expect gender shifts in the composition of work registrant and E&T participant groups.
- Challenge the stigma associated with poverty and public assistance.

Wages/Skills/Education Parity. High school/GED education alone is no longer an important factor in labor market viability. Many recent and most current jobs held by participants were mainly in the secondary labor market which is characterized by low wages, few if any benefits, less-desirable working conditions, and high turnover, despite the fact that most had finished high school or GED and many have had some postsecondary education or vocational course work. This may reflect the low value employers place on a high school diploma/GED and low-skilled workers. If true, as many labor market observers hold, the employment and earnings gains from programs like BOND can be expected to be seriously constrained without a strong emphasis on postsecondary education and high-skills training, whether provided directly through the

program, by the private sector employer, or through a joint effort. "Gateway" programs for individuals who complete their GED or return to school after extended time periods could be designed to help individuals with the transition to a postsecondary environment.

Peer and Lifelong Learning. Many participants found BOND's encouragement of peer learning and teaching highly effective and an opening to long-term gains through lifelong learning. The outstanding positive experience for many was "the other people," learning from each other. Social interaction in itself was very beneficial in many cases. Feelings of loneliness and isolation may be more intense for those living in poverty. BOND fostered self-esteem and confidence through its encouragement of group learning. These gains are very difficult to measure, but the sense given by participants is that they are significant.

Peers are also an effective mode of program extension. Some BOND participants had recommended the program to friends. "Marketing" of BOND at orientation might be strengthened by individuals returning and sharing their success stories with others. Programs like BOND, that can offer substantive benefits to participants, should build more upon their successes and struggle less to overcome client resistance to participation.

Allied with this is the need to recognize short-term, incremental accomplishments and focus on sustaining and building upon these gains after program completion. Expanded post-program services, including continuing education, training, job search assistance and case management, could support this objective.

Lifelong learning could be further supported by change in policy and program design. Policy makers could eliminate the twenty hour participation requirement for employed persons, but continue providing them services while enrolled in part-time education and training directed towards their long-term self-sufficiency. For those no longer requiring public assistance, a continuum of activities and services could made available through the new Texas Workforce Commission.

Flexibility/Individualized Services. Employment and training programs should provide independent, individualized assessment and service planning procedures that incorporate informed client choice concerning available components, job goals and realistic employment expectations. The survey indicated the wide range of needs and circumstances among participants and within Service Levels. Many survey participants were not fully informed of all BOND activities; this limited their ability to take full advantage of the program and limited volunteer opportunities.

Program staff should recognize that women and men may have different needs, expectations and experiences. Survey data suggest that women face a greater challenge

in finding work that can allow them to advance towards self-sufficiency. On average, women in the survey held previous jobs that were shorter and paid less than those of men. Their expected wages after BOND, as well as those for their ideal and realistic job choices, were significantly lower as well.

Furthermore, the care of children is a household responsibility that appears to remain firmly in the domain of women. Lack of child care was a persistent employment barrier among women with children. As such, any expansion of the BOND model should develop access to in-program and post-program child care.

Policy makers should consider developing on-site child care centers at community and technical colleges which could provide employment opportunities, reduce child care cost, and support increased enrollments in postsecondary education and vocational training. These centers could be partially staffed by child development interns, work-study students, and qualified volunteers, thereby providing educational, paid, and unpaid work experiences for participants and non-participants. By tapping into unpaid and subsidized labor the centers could reduce costs. Most importantly, access to convenient, quality child care would assist individuals and families in-need to complete their education and training, moving them closer to economic independence.

Demographic Shifts. At least initially, gender shifts in demographics appear to be program effects of BOND. Between the baseline participant survey (FY 1993) and the first round of the panel study (FY 1995), there has been a significant rise in the number of females and decline in the number of males in the county work registrant group and in the group of those who actually participated in E&T (Table 4.1). The increase in females may partially be explained by changes in exemption and volunteer policy. Previously women or family members responsible for children younger than six years of age were exempt from work registration and there was no opportunity to volunteer for E&T services. For the BOND demonstration, the age was lowered to three and exempt individuals could volunteer. In addition to the structural change in the work registrants population, BOND may have served as a magnet for those who needed child care to achieve their education and training objectives. .[12]

The decline in males may be another program effect. Survey participants in BOND indicated that there were individuals who would rather lose their benefits than participate. Single men without dependents may have more marginal attachment to Food Stamps than others; men in general may have real or perceived opportunity costs that

[12]The impact component of the BOND evaluation will quantify changes related to exemption policy.

prejudice their participation. The more intensive components lasting over a longer period of time have effectively raised the cost of receiving Food Stamps; the cost may be too high for those with other subsistence alternatives.

Table 4.1
Gender Composition of Work Registrant and Participant Groups

	Participant Surveys		E&T Participants		McLennan County Work Registrants	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Baseline (March 1993)	62	38	68	32	60	40
First Round (November 1994)	37	63	37	63	51	49

Source: Baseline Participant Survey, 1994 Participant Survey, Texas JOBS Files

Stigma of Poverty and Public Assistance. Many participants articulated a public stigma attached to poverty and public assistance. Most expressed a feeling of shame about being on Food Stamps and perceived resentment from the general public. Others felt resentment about having "to go through this," feeling it was an added injury during difficult times in their lives. Many participants themselves held the popular stereotypes about welfare recipients as lazy and irresponsible. Although most discovered these to be false through BOND participation, these attitudes created divisions within this population that diminished the potential for group learning and support.

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In the broader context, policy makers should more closely address the links between economic and welfare policies. Current policy sends mixed signals to the private sector—advocating on one side, high-skilled, high-wage jobs as the future for the domestic workforce and providing on the other a supply of low-skilled, low-wage workers from public assistance programs. Ideally, we need to develop mutually-beneficial partnerships between employers and programs in which employers receive the benefit of BOND pre-employment screening and well-prepared employees, and in exchange they provide jobs that have family-friendly, learning environments with well-defined career paths.

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Appendix A
Profiles of Survey Participants

Joe, a 37 year-old with a wife and teenage stepson, is making a remarkable journey after experiencing great disappointment in the job market upon leaving the military three years ago. Despite having advanced during eight years of military service to a high paying job in a technical field, he could only find work as a janitor which he did for a year at half his former salary. This would not allow him to support his family. His wife who has serious medical problems (that require Joe's care) does not work and receives AFDC; in addition, he pays child support to his ex-wife and supports his stepson whose father doesn't meet his child support obligation. Although Joe has a high school diploma and a good work history, he recognized that inadequate education and job skills were barriers to better employment and consequently enrolled in TSTC to get an Associate's Degree toward a career in robotics engineering. Confident and well-directed, he planned to attend school full-time in order to begin his new career as soon as possible. The GI Bill, as well as additional federal aid, made this possible. BOND, however, provided important complementary assistance that enabled him to concentrate wholly on school and family responsibilities.

Maintaining a 4.0 grade point average, Joe has refocused his career goals on stress analysis in engineering. He finds TSTC is providing an excellent education, one that is very close to the labor market and attuned to employer needs. For example, he reported during our second interview that he has already received a job offer of $40,000 a year in stress analysis. He expects to make $50,000 after he graduates next year, considerably more than his estimated self-sufficient wage of $35,000. Interested in people and very helpful, serving as a volunteer math tutor, he strongly recommends BOND to others. "BOND takes stress off students... helps them with financial worries so they are able to concentrate on schooling." He also believes BOND will have a positive effect on his stepson, instilling in him the importance of higher education.

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Mary is a 38 year-old divorcee with a three year-old son. She has lived in Waco for 18 years and is currently living in public housing where she is afraid to let her son go outside. She is very willing to relocate for work. Unable to count on child support payments, she is struggling to put together various sources of outside assistance to meet her basic needs; yet the only ones she says that are met well are those helped by BOND (transportation and child care). Mary works part-time as a fast food cashier where she has already declined promotions to managerial positions because of the scheduling conflicts

they would interfere with caring for her son. She also reports that she must stand for longer periods than her doctor advises, causing severe back pain. She says she is afraid to complain too much because "eventually you will lose your job if you ask for too much flexibility." Compounding her health problems, she does not have medical insurance; she goes to the emergency room as needed.

She volunteered for BOND to get the child care she needed in order to attend MCC where she is pursuing an Associate's Degree in computer programming. "I couldn't make it without BOND at this point in my life." She believes she is "fairly likely" of finding her ideal job as a computer programmer because of this degree. Also, MCC gives her an advantage in the labor market: "Companies send vacancies to MCC instructors who pass them on to students." However, she believes that the local labor market is poor and that she would only be able to get a job as a medical secretary at $13,000 a year if she stayed.

At first, Mary expected to make $25,000 a year after BOND which is more than her self-sufficiency estimate of $21,500. This estimate went up to $30,000 in the second round, perhaps due to a greater understanding of the realities of self-sufficiency gained during BOND. A very determined and articulate individual, Mary grew in confidence while in BOND, later finding it "very likely" that she would get her ideal job as a computer networking specialist in the government. Mary emphasized that benefits were more important than money; she especially wants to work for a "family-oriented" organization with flex time to better balance work with taking care of her young son.

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Lisa, a recently divorced 35 year-old mother of three daughters between eight and ten years of age, lives with her parents on their family farm. Her divorce, ending a ten year marriage, was extremely difficult and the depression she felt was made worse by her fears of entering the job market after ten years as a homemaker. Though she had completed high school and had a 1984 certificate in bookkeeping, she felt her lack of work experience was a significant barrier to employment. She liked BOND especially for the unpaid work experience it provided her. In fact, BOND opened up a new career for her; she discovered in doing unpaid work in physical therapy that she "really likes it" and went on to get a certificate as a nursing aide at MCC.

Although she is presently working in another field (clerical), she is very happy because the company is "family-friendly," (e.g., allowing days off when needed for family reasons). It also encourages employees to move up career ladders. Lisa says that BOND gave her the confidence and assertiveness to get this job. A very engaging, intelligent and hard-working individual, she has clearly managed a very difficult life transition well. Lisa jokingly says she has an exhausting schedule: in addition to working full-time, she takes

care of her elderly parents and her daughters whom she home schools with a friend. She is also active in a busy social group. She still feels that her education is inadequate, but says she has too many responsibilities to pursue a further degree at present. She believes BOND has had a very positive effect on her family. "I will be able to provide a little more materially for [my girls], including a [better] home schooling curriculum, to give them a better life, and give them a role model. Just cause they're girls, I want them to know they can still do whatever they want in life."

*****

Peggy, a 27 year-old single mother who lives alone with her eight year-old son, underwent a dramatic transformation in the BOND program. A recipient of Food Stamps for over four years and of AFDC for two years in the past, Peggy was cynical about the BOND program at first. Having had a bad experience in a previous education and training program, she admits to having a "bad attitude" when she entered BOND as required, "sitting in the back of the class with my arms folded." However, she soon discovered that BOND was a very different kind of program, with a genuine interest in her development. "BOND asked us what we wanted to do. That's the big difference." Instead of staying only to keep her benefits, Peggy said, "Teachers motivated me to complete BOND."

Becoming an enthusiastic participant in BOND, she finished her GED, completed job preparation, and did unpaid work as a counselor at a youth center which she found very fulfilling. Her love of children, seen in the joy she has with the children in her large extended family, is clearly evident in her work here. "Kids appreciate you listening to them, [letting them] share good things that happen at school." She is now a paid permanent employee at this center (BOND reimbursed her for uniform and shoes expenses). In addition to helping her get this job, BOND helped her overcome her "stubbornness" and greatly improved her group interaction skills, even affirming her leadership abilities. Now one of BOND's strongest advocates, Peggy, articulate and gregarious, has been asked to serve as a spokesperson to new BOND classes. "They [BOND] are there...interested in your life...[asking] 'What is it that you want?' They're not trying to be boss, but a friend, trying to share their knowledge."

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George, a 35 year-old, married with two children between eight and ten years of age, was the primary wage earner for his household until he was suddenly laid off from a high-paying job where he worked for ten years. He had never been on public assistance before and never thought he would be. He now confronted the challenge of entering the job market with a high school degree, unable to find openings in his skill area (heating and air conditioning). Having completed vocational training in this field at TSTC in 1986, he

had felt secure that this was his permanent career. Making his job search more difficult was his feeling that "He had let his family down." He knew his sense of failure was causing family strains. "I was in such a deep depression, [my son] could see it in me and his grades went from As to Fs."

He entered BOND after four months of an unsuccessful job search, further depressed that he was joining a population whom he had always considered "people who don't want to work." This belief, he said, was dispelled while in the BOND program. Unfortunately, early experiences in life skills which he found "degrading" ("They were teaching what should be common sense.") only worsened his state of mind. But he soon found BOND was very helpful in teaching him job search skills which he said "were very different from what I knew ten years ago." In particular, he received good application advice which he attributes to helping him find a new job. While this job provided extensive training and a modest career path with benefits, it pays only half his previous salary and necessitates difficult adjustments at home. This points to the more general problem of dislocated workers unable to find jobs at comparable pay levels. George, however, is hopeful that a job in his former skill area close to his former pay will open up eventually.

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Debbie, a 22 year-old mother of two sons, three years and 16 months of age, and remarried just recently after having been divorced, is finding it difficult to raise her family, since her former husband is not meeting his child support obligations. With a high school diploma and a good work history (mainly receptionist and cashier jobs), she volunteered for BOND because of the child care assistance that would enable her to go back to school. Child care assistance is very important to Debbie: "BOND allows them to be in daycare, where I couldn't provide for that before. It puts them in a social situation and prepares them for school, both educationally and socially. It gives them a break from me, and me a break from them." She is also very frustrated that she may not be able to afford this care after leaving BOND. "I don't understand how they'll pay child care for me to go to school, but not to go to work and get off Food Stamps."

She had only minimum wage jobs without benefits in the past and sought a nursing degree at MCC to improve her earning power. "I think I'm wasting my intelligence flipping burgers. I'm not going to get a decent job without BOND. It's important -- for my kids." Personal problems intervened, forcing her to drop out of MCC. However, she later entered an unpaid work position in the mental health field through BOND. Debbie found unpaid work experience, "very beneficial. Seeing it first hand, seeing people. Some of it is very sad; some of it works out which is great. Learning from people in the field was very worthwhile." This position led to employment with a promising career track, should

she return to school for a certificate or especially an Associate's Degree in mental health (which she plans to do). She has already received from her employer training in pharmacology, first aid, and CPR. Most importantly, she has gained a deeper understanding of the actual demands of this field. "I could get benefits, if [I were to] take a full-time job at MHMR; there are plenty of opportunities. But I'm not sure I am ready for that yet, to go into client homes, [fearful of how emotionally draining more intensive experience with patients would be]." In addition, concerned that there are limited opportunities in Waco, she also likes the freedom to move throughout Texas that she believes this field offers.

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Mike, a 29 year old who lives with a woman and her two young children, has only lived in Waco for a year, having recently moved from New Jersey, and is having a difficult time making the transition. He has been on Food Stamps for four months, unable to support his family on his minimum wage restaurant job. Not having finished high school, he is enrolled in BOND's GED component which he believes is "very worthwhile" and will help him find a job. Mike had enrolled previously in a vocational course in nursing but didn't finish. His last job before coming to Waco was in retail, paid $6.00 an hour, and provided full benefits; it was also an excellent learning experience, largely because of a supervisor who served as his mentor. He identified this as his ideal job, but he thinks it is "not very likely" that he will get this work because "no one is hiring." Instead, at the time of the first interview, he planned to return to school (after completing his GED) for an Associate's Degree in occupational health management.

Mike started BOND with high expectations, describing BOND as "A great learning experience for anyone, if they're willing to put the amount of time they have to put in. If they accomplish that, there's nothing they can't accomplish." However, at the time of the second interview, Mike had become very disappointed with the program and very doubtful of the quality of BOND placements. He had found a job as a dishwasher since starting BOND but was laid off for his failure to get a Doctor's excuse for his absences; it was clearly a job he didn't want to keep. "They [BOND] wanted you to do food service. (I'm) tired of those jobs, done them all of my life. Then I was put in a dishwashing job, going backwards. I can't wash dishes to support my family." He believed BOND staff "paid more attention to the higher skilled, who were more adaptable" and did not give enough attention to those with greater needs, trying "to just push these people out the door and get the next group ready." Mike was especially critical of the lack of On-the-Job Training; without this, people "will end up the way they were before BOND." Although he had finished his GED classes (which he still thought were very helpful), he had not yet received

his test grades (due to an inexplicable problem) and seemed to have lost interest in completing his GED. While he didn't identify any employment barriers at the time of the first interview, he now believed poor labor market conditions were significant barriers. No longer planning to enter TSTC to get an Associate's Degree, he said he is going to return to New Jersey where he believes the labor market is much better and he is "very likely" to find his ideal job in retail.